



This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

- + *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
- + *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
- + *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
- + *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

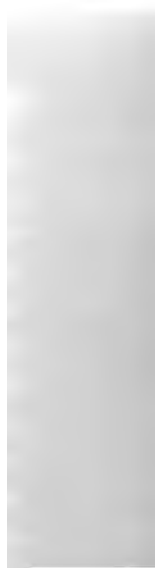
Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at <http://books.google.com/>

NYPL RESEARCH LIBRARIES



3 3433 07606413 2

[REDACTED]







ROBERT
1912
NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY

ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R L



LIKE A TIGRESS SHE TURNED AND FACED HIM. *Frontispiece. p. 12*





LIKE A TIGRESS SHE TURNED AND FACED HIM. *Frontispiece, p. 12*



KINDLING

A Story of To-day

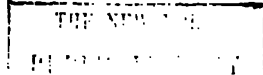
From the Play of
CHARLES KENYON
by
ARTHUR HORNBLow



ILLUSTRATIONS BY
WILLIAM F. TAYLOR

G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

c1912
40



105080B

**Copyright, 1912, by
G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY**

**Entered at Stationers' Hall
All rights reserved**

Kindling



CONTENTS

CHAPTER							PAGE
I.	(a)	10	10	10	10	•	7
II.	•	•	•	•	10	10	28
III.	•	10	10	•	10	•	45
IV.	•	•	•	•	10	•	58
V.	10	10	•	10	10	•	81
VI.	•	•	•	•	10	•	102
VII.	•	•	10	•	•	•	122
VIII.	•	•	•	•	•	•	139
IX.	•	•	10	•	•	•	157
X.	•	•	•	•	10	•	174
XI.	•	10	•	•	•	•	194
XII.	•	•	•	•	•	•	210
XIII.	•	•	10	•	•	•	229
XIV.	•	•	•	•	•	•	244
XV.	•	•	10	•	•	•	261
XVI.	•	•	•	•	•	•	277
XVII.	•	•	•	•	•	•	298
XVIII.	•	•	10	•	•	•	320
XIX.	•	•	10	•	•	•	343



ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
Like a tigress she turned and faced him. . . . <i>Frontispiece</i>	12
"Ye needn't raise a finger—and I'll give ye half."	162
"That guy with the whiskers was me."	254
"Ye didn't swipe that to git yer needs of life, did ye?" . .	317





KINDLING

CHAPTER I

“**L**OOK out there!”
Crash! Scr—rrr—rh!
There was the grinding sound of emergency brakes suddenly applied, warning shouts from bystanders, a single horrible, heartrending, childish scream of agony and then—an unnatural silence.

The onlookers, momentarily dazed by the suddenness of the catastrophe, rushed from all directions to the center of the narrow, wretchedly paved thoroughfare, where a luxurious automobile had come to a sudden standstill, and men with blanched faces and trembling hands stooped to extricate from under the murderous wheels what appeared to be a bundle of rags. Tenderly they lifted the pathetic burden, and as more of it came into view it was seen to be the body of a little girl about eight years of age, only a moment ago a pretty, flaxen-haired,

laughing child, now a mass of bruised, bleeding flesh, another innocent victim of the modern Jugernaut, the pleasure touring car of the rich.

"My God! It's little Mary Kelly!" cried hoarsely a young woman who chanced to be passing, and who had run up to learn the cause of the commotion.

The accident had barely happened when the roadway was already packed with the morbid and curious of both sexes, a mob of grimy, frowsy, unkempt humanity. Where all the people came from it would be difficult to tell. They buzzed like flies from sinister, evil-smelling doorways; they swarmed like ants up from damp, underground cellars; like a irresistible flood they poured from every adjacent side street, pushing, gesticulating and shouting in a dozen strange tongues and dialects, all eager to miss no detail of what had happened. Who could blame them? Gruesome though it might be, it was a spectacle free to all and Poverty Hollow could not afford to be too choise in the matter of its diversions. Dearly it loved a sensation. A street fight, a runaway, a fire, a gambling house raid, anything was welcome so long as it relieved the monotony of the humdrum working day.

"Mercy to God! Mercy to God! It's little Mary Kelly!"

Fighting, kicking, shoving her way through the serried mass of sensation-loving spectators, Maggie Schultz broke through the excited crowd and reached the side of the rescuers almost before they had the child in their muscular arms.

"Give her to me—give her to me!" she cried, frantically.

"Is ye the mother, m'm?" inquired one of the men, a brawny longshoreman, sympathetically.

The young woman paid no attention to the question. Her hands nervously clenched, she stared stupidly at the child's white face and closed eyes.

"Naw," answered a bystander, "her mother's workin' out by the day. They're neighbors, that's all."

At last, by an effort, Maggie found her tongue. Holding out her arms for the child she stammered:

"Is—is she hurt?"

The man shook his head as gently he laid the little victim on her lap.

"I guess she's a goner; the cop's went to call an ambulance."

Sinking down on the greasy, ill-paved road, the inert, limp mass on her knees, Maggie stared helplessly at the unconscious form. That the little victim was beyond aid never occurred to her. She only knew that this neighbor's child whom she loved

as though she were her own was hurt, and that she must do the best possible for her till her mother returned. Tremblingly, awkwardly, she tried to ascertain the extent of the injuries. Claspings the frail little form to her breast she rocked to and fro, murmuring gently:

"Is ye hurt, Mary dear? Speak, child; it's Maggie that's with ye."

Suddenly she heard, close by, a man's voice raised in a tone of authority. A stranger had elbowed his way into the tragic circle and stood over them.

"I'm a physician—Dr. Taylor," he explained hurriedly as he stooped down. "I was in the automobile. The child ran right into us. I hope she's not much hurt."

Maggie looked up. The newcomer was tall, young and well dressed. His refined, clean-shaven face and immaculate linen were in such sharp contrast to the unwashed, disheveled, gin-sodden derelicts around her that, for a moment, she was awed into that humble attitude of respectful deference which dependents, by sheer force of habit, assume before their social superiors. But to-day Maggie Schultz was not in a mood to humble herself to anyone. Enraged at this cruel wrong done to her neighbor's child, yet striving to control herself, she waited impatiently to hear what the fine gentleman

had to say. Quickly she realized that he belonged to the class with which her class was at war, the thoughtless, insolent rich, who stop at nothing in pursuit of their selfish pleasures, racing luxurious cars through crowded streets with the speed of express trains, reckless of life and limb of others, defiant of law and common decency, not even deterred by the awful sacrifice of human life. She did not know who the stranger was, but vaguely she felt that he, and the swell folk with him, were responsible for what had happened to the child she loved.

Anxiously, eagerly she watched him as he made a hasty examination. She noticed that his face grew white and his lip tightened.

"It's worse than I thought," he muttered. "I'm afraid the child is dead!"

Maggie caught only the last word. The blood receded from her face, leaving her deathly pale. Laying her tragic burden tenderly on the ground, she rose slowly to her feet. With choking, broken voice she stammered:

"Dead, did ye say?"

A look of frightened astonishment spread over her face. Fearfully she glanced from the stranger to the motionless little form at her feet. Her bosom heaving with suppressed emotion, she remained dazed and speechless, as if stunned. Then, all at

once, she gave a stifled cry that sounded like a sob. But only for a minute. Her motherly sympathy was almost instantly forgotten in a fierce outburst of indignation. Like a tigress she turned and faced him. Shaking her clenched fist, first at the physician, then at the richly dressed occupants of the automobile, who were standing up in their car craning their necks to see, she cried wildly:

"Then ye killed her—ye and them like ye! God in Heaven, what's youse fine folks made of? Ain't ye flesh and blood like ourselves? Has ye no heart? Ain't it enough that ye grind us under foot, starve us, humiliate us? Ain't it enough that ye make our men work on beggarly wages in yer mills and factories and force us to pay rent for holes I'd be ashamed to put a dog in, without ye wantin' to come here to kill our children?" Raising her voice she almost screamed: "Get out o' here, ye murderers! Get out o' here before these people get their tempers up! Some o' them has children, too. It might go badly with ye, if they took it in their heads to make ye pay for it!"

Attracted by her violent language and no less expressive gesticulations, the crowd pressed closer. Men and women began to boo. Open threats were heard, and the mob, ready for any mischief in its present ugly mood, began to close in on the auto-

mobile from all sides. Suddenly a boy threw a stone. Nothing more was needed to precipitate trouble.

"Smash the d——d car!" cried a dozen raucous voices.

A brick, this time better aimed, hit one of the handsome, nickel-plated headlights. There was a crash of splintering glass followed by a wild yell of delight from the crowd. The chauffeur, a young fellow plainly frightened at the unpleasant turn affairs were taking, began to make frantic efforts to crank the car, but before he could get the motor started a burly stevedore roughly seized his arm.

"Naw ye don't!" he said sneeringly. "Ye don't get out o' here till the cop comes, and may be not then. See?"

"He's the feller as done it!" screeched a wizened, toothless old hag who pushed her way through to the front row of spectators. Trembling with rage and shaking her withered fist in the young man's face, the beldame cried shrilly, "I seen ye, I seen ye! The poor child ran across the street and ye wouldn't stop, ye murderer! Ye killed her—ye killed her!"

The bystanders, thus encouraged, became bolder, more threatening. A group of toughs, who had been scowling and muttering, suddenly made a rush

and seizing hold of the chauffeur's arms and legs began to pull him from the seat, where he had taken refuge.

"Lynch the ———!" cried hoarse, angry voices.

Pluckily, desperately, the chauffeur stood his ground and, shaking off his first assailants, picked up a steel wrench and prepared to defend himself.

Inside the machine were two women, one an elderly dame, fashionably, if somewhat overdressed, the other a pretty girl of barely twenty. Their handsome hats and valuable fur coats and the rich equipment of the automobile were all the more striking because of the squalid surroundings. The luxuriously upholstered car, with its soft cushions and elegant appointments, the gloss of its brilliantly finished surface, the highly polished nickel fittings, the hothouse flowers, in their dainty glass holder, the occupants in their fine clothes—all this was fully as potent an attraction to many as the tragedy which had been the direct cause of the assemblage. The mere killing of a child was of too common occurrence to arouse Poverty Hollow, but millionaires wearing fine duds and sparklers that cost a fortune—that one didn't see every day. So the *canaille*, dirty, unkempt, hideous, menacing, pressed close to the car, staring the two women out of countenance,

feeling the tires with curiosity, jumping on the step, sounding the horn, in a word committing all the thousand and one annoyances of the incorrigible street *gamin*. The neighborhood was so wretchedly poor that its denizens seldom had an opportunity to see the wealthy at close range, and it was not so much anger or a desire to do the inmates bodily harm as curiosity that suddenly prompted the mob to spring to the car door and wrench it open. But to the occupants the peril seemed near and real enough. For the moment Mrs. Burke-Smith forgot that she was a descendant of the fighting Burkes and social leader in Manhattan's most wealthy and exclusive circle, and, dropping her dignity, she emitted a shrill scream, which, for penetrating power, would have put any self-respecting steam calliope to shame.

Dr. Taylor, who had remained near Maggie, helping to do what was possible for the child, heard the cry and, immediately realizing the cause, ran towards the automobile, while Maggie, somewhat startled at this unexpected, yet quite natural, outcome of her fiery denunciation, looked on in a kind of dazed stupor. The excitement was at its height when suddenly the loud gong of a galloping ambulance was heard. The next instant the "hurry-up wagon" was on the spot and two policemen got down together with the young surgeon.

The crowd scattered quickly at sight of the blue-coats, and Mrs. Burke-Smith, feeling very much as does a condemned prisoner who escapes the chair, sank back in her luxurious cushions and breathed more freely. What an escape! There was no telling what might have happened. It was her own fault for venturing into such a dreadful neighborhood. But now that the peril was past she gave free rein to her indignation. Wiping, with the daintiest of Valenciennes handkerchiefs, the perspiration of fear from her fat, enameled face, she gasped:

"The horrid wretches! How dare they? They can't know who I am. I've no doubt that some of them are my tenants. Our tenement is near here somewhere. I'd turn them out bag and baggage if I only knew which they were!" Turning to her young companion she added angrily: "Well, Alice, what do you think of your friends now? These are the people you spend all your time and money on. This is the thanks you get. I'm surprised they didn't kill us!"

In spite of the apprehension she herself felt, the young girl could not help smiling. Soothingly she replied:

"Oh, auntie, it wasn't so bad as all that. They're excited and angry. Can you wonder at it? Poor

things, they've so much in their lives to embitter them." Looking out over the heads of the crowd she added: "I hope no one's seriously hurt."

As she spoke, Dr. Taylor, who after herculean efforts had succeeded at last in pushing his way through the mob, ran up to the car.

"They didn't hurt you, did they?" he asked anxiously.

His question was addressed to both women, but his eyes sought only those of the younger one.

"No," smiled Alice; "they frightened auntie, that's all."

"All?" snapped Mrs. Burke-Smith indignantly. "We've had a narrow escape from being massacred. Just now, for the first time, I realized what those terrible days of the French Revolution must have been. I never saw such a collection of murderous, sinister looking faces. What's the matter? What do they want with us?"

The physician looked grave.

"We've run over a child. At first I was afraid she was dead, but I was mistaken. Thank God, she's still alive. Badly hurt though. Don't you see the ambulance?"

Alice turned pale and started from her seat.

"Run over a child! Oh, how horrible!"

"Little wonder," grumbled Mrs. Burke-Smith, re-

arranging her ruffled furs. "The little brats are always getting in the way. It quite spoils the pleasure of motoring. Who's that hussy who talked so loud and dared to shake her fist at us? She's responsible for all this excitement. The impertinent minx! A good for nothing, I'll wager on that. I don't see how she dared. I'll have her arrested. I'll—" She stopped suddenly as she saw her niece preparing to leave the car. Shocked, she exclaimed: "Alice, what can you be thinking of! Where are you going?"

She raised an arm as if to prevent anything so foolhardy, but too late. Assisted by the physician, the girl had already jumped down and was hurrying toward the crowd gathered about the ambulance surgeon. By dint of pushing with his big, square shoulders, Dr. Taylor made a passage through, Alice clinging tightly to his arm. Inside the circle, all eyes were intent on the young surgeon, who was giving first aid to the poor little victim. Maggie Schultz stood close by, her face drawn, her eyes full of tears. Alice's escort saluted his colleague.

"I'm Dr. Taylor, of ——— Hospital," he explained. "I was in the car with two ladies. The child ran across the road. We couldn't stop in time. Is she badly hurt?"

The surgeon, a boyish-looking fellow with blue

eyes and a frank smile, looked up. Shaking his head, he replied gravely:

"Yes—she's in pretty bad shape. I've done what I can for her. I'll get her to the hospital as fast as I can. You'd better give your name and address to the officers."

The policemen crossed over to where the physician was standing. Respectfully one of them said:

"I'm sorry, sorr! But I'll have to ask you to drive your car to the station house. It's an accident, of course, but if the child dies it's a homicide case." Taking out his note book, he added: "What's the name, sorr?"

While the men were talking, the surgeon tenderly lifted the little girl and carried her to the ambulance, followed by Maggie, who helped him make the child as comfortable as possible. Impressed with the solicitude the young woman showed, the surgeon glanced at her and smiled. Laconically he asked:

"Relation?"

She shook her head.

"Naw—neighbors—that's all."

"Do you want to come with us to the hospital?"

Again Maggie shook her head.

"Naw. I'll go and find the mother. I know where she's workin'!"

He nodded adieu carelessly.

"All right—so long!"

Swinging himself on to the slender board at back of the wagon that did duty as a seat, he gave the signal to the driver, who whipped up his horse. A moment later the ambulance was almost out of sight, going like the wind, leaving Maggie standing on the curb.

She was a good-looking young woman of about five and twenty, buxom and strong, full of youthful life and energy. Her eyes, dark and large, shone with intelligence, her cheeks were ruddy with the glow of health and sound white teeth testified to perfect digestion. The full figure and wide hips suggested that she was of the mold of women whom Nature intended for maternity.

Child of the slums, Maggie Schultz had thrived in spite of miserable, unspeakable environments. Often she said, laughingly, that nothing could kill her since she had survived so much. Her parents she had never known. The mother was a chronic drunkard and died on the Island as the result of a prolonged spree; who her father was no one knew. Her first recollection was running barefoot in the streets, selling papers for a brutal Italian, who beat her because she refused to beg. She ran away from him and a kindly woman, in compassion, took her in and fed her. She stayed with this good samari-

tan some time, running errands, washing dishes and minding the baby; then when she grew bigger she got work in a factory, where she met Heinie. It was love at first sight. He was big and strong, different somehow from the rest of the boys. While he showed plainly enough that he admired her, he never took liberties and was always respectful. Like most girls with her good looks, Maggie had been tempted more than once to stray from the straight path. Steve Bates, a flash youth of the neighborhood, had been offensively insistent in this regard, giving her presents and inviting her to picnics; but well aware that he was a crook, she would have nothing to do with him. She had always been a good girl. She had refused to frequent dance halls or associate with girls of bad character, and this, as much as anything else, attracted her to Heinie, who was serious, industrious and sober. Her affection for him grew until one day, when he proposed abruptly that they should hit it up together, she gave ready assent. Why not? He was good to her; she did not think he would beat her. So they got married, and never had she regretted it. If there was anything beautiful and sincere in Maggie's life, it was her pure, unselfish devotion for her stalwart husband.

As she stood watching the ambulance swiftly

disappear in the distance, the young woman felt a choking sensation rise up in her throat. Her anger of a few moments before had given way to infinite sorrow. What a tragedy is life! To think that only a short while ago poor little Mary Kelly was a merry, romping child, and now—being hurried to the hospital, perhaps to die before she got there. And all this time her poor mother knew nothing of it, so poor that she was compelled to go out working by the day and leave her child to be killed in her absence. What would the wretched mother say? How could she break it to her? Ah, these were the penalties of motherhood! Children were a joy no doubt, but they brought pain and grief with them as well as sunshine. Only the rich could afford to have children. What right had they to bring offspring into the world, and let them run wild and sicken with disease for want of proper nutrition and sanitation? Ever since she married Heinie she had wished that she might have a child. Her heart yearned for one. Never was the maternal instinct stronger in any woman. She longed for a child, but not if it was to be butchered as this poor little Mary Kelly had been mangled to-day. Yet this poor child, she mused, was only one of countless tiny victims. Of the thousands of infants born in the slums how many survive their awful surround-

ings? The mortality was frightful, over fifty per cent. And even of those who manage to survive, how many grow up to be decent men and women? How can they be decent, having all about them vice and crime from their very cradle? There were times when she dreamed of a life she had never known, but of which she had read in books, life in the country, away from the big cities with their rottenness and corruption, a land where she could live in a cottage with her husband and do farming work and see her children grow up ruddy and strong. But that was only a dream, never to be realized. Heinie knew nothing about farming. They hadn't the money to get away from the city, even if he did. He was as honest and sober and industrious as any man in the mill, but the wages were slender and the employment uncertain. It took everything he earned to keep life and soul together. How could she have a baby, living in the rotten hole they did—the Smith tenements? Weren't they the by-word and the disgrace of the East Side? Yet such lodgings as they were, they were the best they could afford. Besides, it was the only place they could get near the factory. Heinie had to be near his place of work. But how could folk live in such a hole and be decent? A tumble down rookery, cracked from cel-

lar to roof, infested with vermin, with dark, narrow halls and stairways and courtyards affording neither light nor air. Was it a wonder that people nicknamed it "Consumption Row." Yes, Heinie was right. It would be wicked to bring a child into the world to inherit that. He wouldn't hear of children. How her heart bled sometimes for her neighbors' children! Poor little souls—ill fed, barely clothed, exposed to every kind of weather, left to get along in the gutter as best they can, often so hungry that, like famished wolves, they'd rake over garbage barrels for rotten, putrid scraps of fish, meat and bread. And who cared! Children were cheap. Their little lives meant nothing. They were just kindling, that's all—just kindling in the fierce blaze called life! Ah, it was just as well that she had never had a child!

Drying her eyes, she was about to move away when all at once she felt a gentle hand placed on her shoulder. Looking round she saw Alice and, at once recognizing her as being the younger of the two women in the automobile, was instantly on the defensive. A hard, set look came into her face. She was about to move away when Alice said:

"May I ask your name?"

Maggie scowled. A look of suspicion spread over her face. What did this stranger want?

"What's you'rn?" she demanded, with studied insolence.

The young girl smiled.

"Oh, my name is Alice Kemp. I'm the niece of Mrs. Burke-Smith, the lady in the automobile." Earnestly she went on: "I'm sorry about that accident."

Maggie shrugged her shoulders and looked away. Bitterly she retorted:

"Bein' sorry don't help much——"

"My aunt would like to make what amends possible," went on the girl eagerly. "Do you know where we can find the child's parents? I would so like to do what I can. Oh, do let me!"

There was something so sincere, so genuine in the girl's appeal that, for the moment, Maggie forgot her hostility and looked at the fashionably gowned young lady in surprise. It was somewhat of a novelty to find folks from Fifth Avenue finding anything to interest them in the slums. Besides, now she came to look at her more closely, it seemed to her that she had seen the young lady before. Eyeing her dubiously, she said:

"Ain't I seen ye somewhere?"

"It's very likely," replied the girl frankly. "I'm often in this neighborhood. I'm one of the Settlement workers, you know. I visit the sick and the

poor. I get up lectures and readings. I try to do what I can to save the young people from the temptations of the streets."

Maggie nodded approvingly. In more friendly fashion she said:

"Oh, I didn't know you was one of them. Ye was in our place last week, wasn't ye?"

"Your place?" echoed the girl, looking at her in surprise. "Where is that?"

"Why, in the Smith tenement. Consumption Block some call it. You was callin' on Mrs. Waters's sick baby on the first floor. We live three floors above."

The girl smiled. Eagerly she said:

"Oh, yes—of course, now I remember. You are Mrs. Schultz. Mrs. Waters has often spoken of you. She says you're so kind to her——"

Maggie shrugged her shoulders. Bitterly she replied:

"We poor folk has to help each other. If we didn't, who would?" Moving away she added: "Poor little Mary Kelly lives in our block, too. Her mother works by the day. I've got to go and find her—to tell her what's happened. Sure, it'll be hard."

She looked away and Alice approached her. Laying a hand on her arm, she said kindly:

"You said some hard things about us to your

friends here just now. It nearly made trouble. The accident wasn't our fault. You ought to know that. Your face is kind. You look like a good woman. Why do us an injustice?"

Maggie turned round quickly.

"Injustice!" she cried scornfully. "Can ye and yer kind talk of injustice? Not yer fault—no, nothing's yer fault—not even the way in which we poor folk live. Ye have no idea how we live—what the conditions are—how can ye? Ye don't have to live in 'em!"

"That's just it," said Alice, gently laying her arm on the young woman's shoulder. "I want to know. I want to find out. Won't you let me come and see you?"

There was something in the girl's manner that Maggie could not resist. Much as she hated the class to which this stranger belonged, there was no hatred in her heart against the individual. This girl had not harmed her. She appeared kind. She wanted to be friendly. She and Heinie did not have so many friends that they could afford to drive them away.

"Very well," she said, more amiably, "drop in any time ye's round. I'm on the fourth floor back. I've got to go now and look for Mrs. Kelly."

The next moment she disappeared in the crowd.



CHAPTER II

DEEP in the very entrails of the slums, Poverty Hollow might well boast of being as pestiferous, vicious, degraded and generally God-forsaken a spot as any to be found in darkest New York. Situated about half a mile east of the Bowery it lay in a natural hollow (hence its name) between that historic thoroughfare and the murky East River. Built up while the big town was still in the making, its houses were not arranged in blocks at regular intervals, but grew up anyhow, as they came, haphazard, the result being a bewildering labyrinth of winding streets, very puzzling to the few strangers who happened to have business there, but exceedingly useful to thieves, pickpockets and other criminals who had reasons of their own for keeping out of the way of the police. The inhabitants of the neighborhood, apart from the bad characters who infested it, were naturally of the poorest class, being for the most part longshoremen whose business was the loading and unloading of

the vast fleet of ocean-going steamships and sailing vessels moored to the river wharves close by.

Vice and violence of all kinds went on unchecked in Poverty Hollow. It was the paradise of crooks and gangsters, who ran things pretty much to suit themselves. No one, the authorities least of all, ever dreamed of interfering. If a gangster was killed, so much the better. It was one desperado the less to deal with. Everything ran wide open. The gin mills were always crowded, on Sunday as well as every other day; the dance halls were open all night, gambling and all other kinds of immorality flourished openly. The sounds of drunken revelry were never stilled. A known refuge of gangsters and criminals of the most dangerous type, even the police held the district in respect, and few detectives could be found there after dark without a Colt within easy reach.

Among the dives for which the district was notorious was a place known as the Dead Rat, an all-night resort of unsavory repute, liberally patronized by longshoremen, stevedores, sailors and stokers. It was also frequented by river pirates, thieves, pick-pockets and prostitutes, which social birds of prey, having as a rule plenty of money to spend, were made specially welcome. Recently the undesirable attention of the police had unfortunately been at-

tracted to the place, owing to a series of desperate shooting affrays between rival gangs battling for supremacy, but, as a general thing, Sam, the proprietor—a bloated, sandy-headed Dutchman—thanks to mysterious influence in high places, was left to do very much as he pleased. There was an ugly legend circulating in the neighborhood that one night a customer, who had become cantankerous and started an altercation with the dive keeper, was dropped through a convenient trap-door into a cellar, where he was carved up with a butcher's knife, and his remains buried in a hole hastily dug under the cellar floor. But the saloon keeper angrily denied the rumor, and as no one made a charge, the police paid no attention to the story, which may, after all, have been malicious gossip.

To-night things were particularly lively in the dance hall. The place was brilliantly illuminated, and the creaky rafters rang with the sounds of drunken revelry and the strains of rag time music. The occasion, indeed, was an auspicious one. Jim the Kid and Slippery Mike, two highly respected members of the underworld and experts in their specialty, who, until quite recently, had been visiting up the River as unwilling guests of the State, had suddenly taken French leave of their official host, and returning post haste to their happy hunt-

ing grounds in Manhattan, showed their gratitude at deliverance from durance vile by "cracking" a millionaire residence uptown. The "job" was a success, and after disposing of their valuable booty to certain discreet "fences" in the Hollow, they proceeded to celebrate their double stunt by giving a jollification at the Dead Rat, and setting 'em up for their admiring pals.

It was an imprudent thing to do, to say the least, for, while the police were willing to wink at a good deal, there were times when the public and the newspapers set up a howl. A big fuss was made about the uptown burglary, and it was put up to Headquarters to find the perpetrators. News travels fast in the underworld, and when Steve Bates, put wise by a friendly "gun," heard that Rafferty, the slickest sleuth on the force, had taken the trail and was to round up the fugitive yeggmen at the Dead Rat that very night, he said to himself that it was time he got busy.

Steve was a bad egg himself, but his loyalty to his cronies was unquestioned. A medium-sized youth of muscular build, he was about twenty-five years old, although a blasé, cynical air which he rather affected made him appear older. His face, clean shaven, had a sneering, crafty expression. His manner was insolent and brazen, fidgety and nerv-

ous. He had a trick of glancing furtively around as if expecting to see someone, or as if constantly apprehensive of a strong hand being laid on his shoulder. Flashily dressed in a tight-fitting, conspicuous gray check suit, a red tie, with red socks to match, cheap patent leather shoes and a brown derby hat worn jauntily on the side of his head, he looked just what he was—a crook.

Yet Steve Bates was not born to wickedness. He could not even blame the bad example of the big city for his distorted outlook on life. The son of poor Irish parents, he first saw the light on a farm in Wyoming. To the splendid health-giving air of that wild, rugged country he owed his good constitution and his strength. Unfortunately his morals did not keep pace with his physique. Naturally indolent and insolent, he had never done a day's honest work in his life. His parents came to New York, and here his father died, leaving his widow, a buxom Irishwoman, to get along with her child as best she could. Drifting haphazard on the stream of life, finding it a constant struggle to keep her head above water, Mrs. Bates finally came to permanent anchor in the wretched Smith tenements, where she took in washing to eke out a slender living. Thus engaged she had little time to look after her son, who ran wild in the streets until soon he

was beyond her control. Instead of finding him a blessing in her old age, as she had fondly hoped, not only did he not contribute to her support, but he actually levied toll, forcing her under threats of violence to give him money for his amusements and dissipations. Naturally he often got into trouble with the police, and then he would disappear for a while until he served out a prison sentence. When released he immediately resumed his old life, until at last he became known as a confirmed criminal.

Yet while she may have secretly grieved, Mrs. Bates always took her wayward boy's part. When her neighbors sympathized with her or chided her for being too lenient, she always found excuses for him, and in time this worthless son succeeded in distorting his own mother's sense of right and wrong, thus confirming the theory advanced by a famous sociologist that degenerate children may, in time, undermine the good morals of worthy parents.

Most of his time Steven spent hanging round saloons, smoking cigarettes, on the chance of hearing of some soft snap where, for the minimum of risk, there might be a chance of making a good haul. Recently, on the strength of his reputation as a strong-arm man, he had secured the coveted position of "bouncer" at the Dead Rat. Priding himself on his stylish appearance and good looks, he also culti-

vated love affairs with the blonde ladies of the neighborhood, and, while his money lasted, was quite successful as squire to the dames of the underworld. To the police he was often useful as a stool pigeon, for, while Steven was loyal to his associates, he was not above standing in well with the "guns" when it served his purpose. But there was nothing to be gained by snitching on Jim the Kid, who had once done him a good turn, so directly he got the word he made all haste possible to the Dead Rat.

When he sauntered in about midnight the place was already full of men and women in various stages of intoxication. The tobacco smoke was so thick that it hung down in clouds like fog on a humid day. There was one long, wide room with a bar at the end, and benches, chairs and small round-topped tables down each side. The center floor, nicely waxed, was reserved for the dancers. The aristocracy of the district, the gang leaders, the local politicians, the prominent crooks, and flashy "con" men sat in little isolated groups smoking good cigars and drinking champagne, while the rank and file were content to quench their unquenchable thirst with huge schooners of foaming beer. In a far corner was the orchestra, comprised of a blind pianist, lent for the occasion by a disorderly house in the neighborhood, a cornet and a violin. To the meas-

ure of the music several couples were dancing the suggestive Grizzly Bear.

Steve pushed quickly through the crowd of standees, everyone giving way to him. Right and left men and women greeted him, but he did not stop until he came upon the objects of his search, who were seated at one of the tables together with Sam, the pot-bellied proprietor of the dive. Surrounded by bottles, Jim the Kid and Slippery Mike were, for the moment, having the time of their lives. They had consumed several quarts of fizz, and on top of that countless glasses of beer. Both were in a state bordering on helpless intoxication.

There was no time to be lost. Quickly Steve stooped down and whispered something in Mike's ear. No one heard what was said, but with a furtive glance in the direction of the front entrance, the young man added impatiently in a louder key:

"There ain't no time to chew the rag. Beat it!"

But Mike declined to be hurried. Looking up with a grin he hiccoughed:

"Say, old sport, what's youse givin' us? Fly cops lookin' fer 'yours truly'? I guess not." Leaning over, he gave his pal a poke in the ribs, and with a drunken laugh went on: "Hey there, Jim, d'ye hear that? Steve the Slugger says Rafferty's got wise to us."

A loud, mocking laugh close by caused Steve to look up and glance in the direction of the merriment. A man sitting alone at another table had been watching the argument and seemed highly amused at Mike's obstinacy. He was a queer looking individual, with tousled, reddish hair and sandy mustache and one eye badly discolored as if he had been mixed up in a recent brawl. No one seemed to know him. Unshaven and collarless, he might be some long-shoreman who had happened to meander into the place by accident.

"D'ye hear?" went on Mike. "We've got to beat it."

Steve emphasized the warning by a vicious kick on the shins.

"Come on," he said hastily. "Get out before they pinch ye."

But Jim the Kid was dead to the world. He had fallen fast asleep, his head resting on his arms folded on the table top. With a muttered curse Steve turned to the proprietor, who, although drunk himself, still retained some of his wits. Warningly he said:

"Say, Sam, ye'd better get these guys out o' here unless ye want to see yer place pulled. There ain't no time to waste chinnin'. Rafferty never lets the

grass grow under his feet. Like as not his men is outside watching the joint now."

The proprietor did not need telling twice. He knew his business and was not taking any chances. Sobering up at once he jumped to his feet and gave a peculiar whistle used in emergency cases. Almost instantly two other "bouncers" ran up. The boss pointed to the two drunks and made a significant gesture, which was evidently understood, for, without further ado and with Steve's assistance, the men lifted up the burglars as they were children.

Jim, too far gone to have any will in the matter, allowed himself to be dragged along peacefully enough, but Slippery Mike, persuaded that he was the victim of a plot to send him back to jail, put up a fight. It was all the three bouncers could do, assisted by the proprietor, to get him on his feet. They were gradually coaxing him towards the rear of the saloon, when suddenly Mike shot out vigorously with his fist, which, landing plumb on Steve's chest, sent that youth sprawling. He would have had a nasty fall against the corner of the iron table but for the red-headed stranger, who, jumping forward in the nick of time, caught him in his arms.

Steve thanked him with a nod, and returned to the job on hand. Finally the bouncers had their wards under control and carried them, despite their

protests, away to the rear of the saloon. The crowd, still intent on the dancing, and accustomed to such happenings, had paid no attention, so the incident passed unnoticed.

"Where's ye puttin' 'em?" demanded Steve.

The proprietor grinned. Making a downward gesture with his thumb he answered:

"Downstairs. We'll let 'em cool off in the secret cellar a while. If Rafferty finds 'em there he's a good 'un. By the time they're sober the scent'll be cold. If ye see the 'gun' give him the right dope. Tell him the boys were sorry they couldn't wait to see him, but they had a pressing engagement and left on the midnight train for Chicago."

Crash!

Quickly the two men looked round. The red-headed stranger, while tilting his chair too far forward to hear what they were saying, had lost his balance and knocked over his schooner of beer, upsetting the precious fluid all over the floor.

As a waiter ran to clean up the mess the stranger was profuse in his apologies.

"Couldn't help it, boss," he grinned.

"All right," growled the proprietor surlily. "Don't try it again, that's all."

"Who is that guy, Sam?" demanded Steve in an undertone.

"Search me," replied the proprietor indifferently. "I never set me peepers on him before."

Turning away, he entered into conversation with some other men at the other side of the saloon.

Having thus carried out the purpose of his visit, Steve took a seat at one of the tables and called for a drink. The red-headed stranger, sitting alone at the adjoining table, looked over and nodded amiably as if trying to scrape acquaintance, but the youth gave him no encouragement. He was not in the mood just then to chin with strangers. Nonchalantly rolling a cigarette, he lit it deliberately, and tilting back his chair carelessly surveyed the crowd. The waiter having brought him whisky, he filled the glass to the brim, and raising it with unsteady hand to his mouth swallowed the contents at a gulp. Smacking his lips with satisfaction, he gave a grunt of relief. The fiery stuff warmed him up for the time at any rate and drove away the "willies." All that day he had been strangely out of sorts, as he always was when his luck was against him. For some time things had not been going to his liking. Firstly, he was "broke," an unfortunate state of affairs in any condition of life, but especially to a youth of his easy money, luxury-loving proclivities. Secondly, his girl had given him the "shake" in no

gentle manner. Having found another Lothario of the quarter more to her liking, Smiling Sue had handed him a "lemon." Both of these setbacks—the one financial, the other social—annoyed the young man almost beyond endurance. He was dead sore. Accustomed to travel along the line of least resistance, it was intolerable to find that he could not have things go just his own way. Jealous? Not much. She was welcome to the big "stiff," but some foggy night, when he caught his successful rival unawares, he'd do him up, just the same if only to show he couldn't be made a monkey of. He'd have to find another girl, not much of a job for such a good looker as himself. Weren't all the girls simply daffy on him? If Maggie hadn't been such a little fool and gone and married that big "stiff" Heinie Schultz she'd have made as good a steady as any single gent in need of an affinity would want. Nice little girl—Maggie—good figure, pretty as a picture. He was willing to treat her right even now if only she didn't stick so close to that d——d husband of hers. Little fool—as if Heinie Schultz, a slob of a stevedore, could ever give her the good time that he could have done. But what was the use of thinkin' of gals when he was dead broke and hadn't a blessed cent to spend on 'em?

He was engrossed in these gloomy reflections and deaf to the gaiety around him when suddenly the sound of his name, uttered in a hoarse whisper, made him look up quickly. A man had quietly dropped in the seat beside him.

"Hello, Charlie!" exclaimed Steve, swinging round in surprise. "What t'hell is youse doin' here? Didn't ye give me the dope ye was gwine to Boston on a slick bank job?"

The newcomer, a low-browed, cadaverous, hollow-chested individual, with small, restless eyes like a ferret, gave a cautious look around before answering. His glance fell on the red-headed stranger, who was watching the dancers, puffing calmly at his pipe. He looked keenly at him for a moment, suspicious, like all crooks, of anybody he did not know, but seeing the stranger paid no attention to him he was reassured. In a coarse undertone he went on:

"It's to-morrow we's goin'—Fall River Line. There ain't no hurry—bank won't run away. It's a cinch all right. If I gets away with it, I'll—" He stopped short, interrupted by a sudden fit of coughing. The spasm over, he completed the sentence: "I'll be in clover for the rest o' me days."

Steve looked glum. Making a gesture to the waiter to bring more whisky, he grumbled:

"Youse fellers has all the luck. I'm up agin it—cleaned out. Hardly got the price of a perfecto."

The newcomer gave him a keen, significant look. Quickly he said:

"Do ye mean yer broke and want to get some of the stuff?"

"Sure thing," replied Steve carelessly. "What d'ye know?"

With a cautious glance around to make sure that no one was listening, the man leaned forward. Eagerly he whispered:

"A cinch, my boy—so easy it's like sneakin' pennies out o' a blind man's tin box. I'd keep it for myself, only I'se got to get busy in Boston. If you're game, I'll put ye wise."

"Sure I'm on," growled Steve. "Spit it out."

Again sinking his voice to a whisper, the man went on:

"It's a swell joint uptown—West 72d Street—Burke-Smith is the guy's name—millionaires—got rich robbing the poor. It's only right to take the stuff from 'em again. They own the Smith tenement down here—why, yes, that's right, you live there—nice hole, ain't it? They oughter be ashamed o' themselves, but they ain't. They think they do a lot by comin' down here and preachin' to poor folk how to be happy and contented on nothin'

a year. If yer lookin' for somethin', it's easy money all right. The house is full of silver and jewelry lying around loose for a quick pick up. One of the maids fell fer me at a dance one night and gave me the lay out——"

"Say, mister, can I trouble yer fer a light?"

The red-headed hayseed thrust his face between the two men, and as Charlie instinctively held out his cigar the stranger gave him a keen, searching look. Then, mumbling a gruff thanks, he moved away and was lost to view in the throng.

"Who's that stiff?" demanded Charlie in a startled whisper.

Steve shook his head. Shrugging his shoulders he answered :

"Some hayseed that's blow in here by mistake. I'm glad he's gone. He was gettin' on me nerves. If he's stayed round much longer I'd have knocked his block off."

"Somehow he reminds me of someone I've met before," said Charlie thoughtfully.

"Never mind him," growled Steve with an oath, "He's gone now. Go on about that job."

"It's a cinch, I tell ye," went on the yeggman. "Once yer in it's a clean get away. The only thing you've to do is to find some way of gettin' in without using a jimmy. The house is too well wired for

a forced entrance. What ye want is someone inside."

"Inside?" echoed the youth. "Who?"

"Why—one of the maids." With a cynical laugh he went on: "Yer a lady killer. Get a mash on the help, and git the gal to open the door fer ye. That's the way to work that job." Springing to his feet he added: "I can't stop a minute. I have to hustle before I start for Bean Town. Ta- ta!"

The next instant he had disappeared.

CHAPTER III

FOR some time after the crook's departure Steve sat still, drumming his fingers on the table. But if his limbs were idle, his mind was busy. What Charlie had told him had set him thinking. Why shouldn't he turn the trick? He knew where the Burke-Smiths lived—one of the swellest houses on 72d Street, near the Park, too, which would be useful in case he had to make a quick get away. The only difficulty was his ignorance regarding the lay of the house. Why hadn't the fool got the proper dope from the maid? Perhaps he himself might be able to scrape acquaintance with the girl. If only he could get in good with her, he could find out where the silver was kept and what chance there was to pick up some of the jewelry. It would be a fat haul all right.

Suddenly his attention was attracted to a young woman who had just entered. She was poorly dressed, and from her respectable, plain appearance it was evident that she did not belong to the class

of dissolute females who frequented the place. Pushing in and out among the crowd it seemed as if she were seeking for someone. Her head was turned from him, but there was something very familiar about her figure. Yes, he was not mistaken. It was Maggie Schultz. When she came within hailing distance he called out to her:

"Hello, Maggie."

The young woman turned quickly, but when she saw who it was, her first instinct was to turn away. Feminine curiosity, however, is no less well developed in the slums than on Fifth Avenue. She knew that Steve was no good—a person, in fact, to keep aloof from, but she could not resist the impulse to speak to him, if only to learn what new devilment he was up to. Besides, he might be able to help in her search. Approaching the table, she asked:

"Has ye seen Tom Kelly in here to-night?"

Drawing out a chair and making a friendly motion to her to sit down, the young man replied:

"Tom—no—why?"

Tired after tramping around all day, Maggie was glad to sit a bit. She did not like the company much, but there was no other chair vacant. Wearily she said:

"His little sister was nearly killed this mornin'—"

run over by an auto. This whole blessed day I'se bin tryin' to find her mother. I thought I knew where she was workin', but she weren't there. Then I goes up town. I know a girl in service in 72d Street. She allus knows where Mrs. Kelly works. I went there, but the girl was out of the city. Then I came here, thinkin' I'd find Tom. The child's in Bellevue. Has ye seen him?"

Steve made no answer. In fact he had scarcely listened. All he had heard were the words: "72d Street." Quickly he said:

"Ye was in 72d Street?"

She looked at him in surprise, not understanding why it should interest him.

"Yes."

"What's the name of the family?"

"What's that to yer?" she demanded, looking at him suspiciously.

"Oh, nothing," he answered carelessly. "I know one of the chauffeurs in that street—that's all."

Reassured, she answered more amiably:

"Burke-Smith is the name of the house I was at."

He leaned over towards her. Eagerly he asked:

"Ye know one of the girls?"

She nodded.

"I knew her before I was married. She's bin in the family some time, but I don't think she'll stay."

She can't go the missis—a regular old cat. No decent girl can stand her.”

“Nice house, though, ain't it?” he went on with studied carelessness.

“Yes, they're rich folk all right. They've got more than they want fer themselves, but they ain't givin' any away to them as need it——”

The young man's manner suddenly grew more friendly and personal. Looking at his *vis à vis* admiringly he exclaimed:

“Sure, ye don't need it, Maggie. I never seen ye lookin' better. That figure and them lips o' yourn is enough to set a man crazy. Take some-thin' to drink, won't ye? I know ye don't touch liquor, but once won't hurt ye. Just to warm ye up.”

“Naw. I must be gettin' home. Heinie won't know what's keepin' me.”

Leaning half way across the table the young man whispered pleadingly:

“Don't go yet, Maggie. It ain't often you and me gets a chance to chin a bit together. We used to be good friends before Heinie came along. I allus had a warm spot fer ye, Maggie. If ye hadn't bin so perticular we might have hit it up together fer good——”

Maggie shrugged her shoulders.

"Not with you, Steve. I don't like the kind of life yer leadin'. No good can come to anyone who spends his time in this kind of a place. This wouldn't suit me at all——"

There was a loud guffaw as if of derision from a table near by. Steve glanced angrily in the direction, and to his amazement there sat the red-headed stranger who had returned without attracting his attention. His first impulse was to go over and smash him in the face, but he was not sure if he was laughing at him, and he had his own reasons for not precipitating a row just then. Turning his back on him, he went on glibly:

"Maybe it's because ye went back on me that I—I might have been a better man if ye'd cared for me——"

She shook her head.

"No, Steve, no woman could change ye. Yer too fond of enjoying the good things without workin' fer 'em. Yer too fond of yer pleasure."

He eyed her cunningly.

"And you, Maggie? Do ye get any pleasure in life? Is ye happy?"

The young woman sighed.

"Happy as we can be on what we've got. Heinie's pay is poor and his work uncertain."

"'Tain't much, is it?" he said sympathizingly.

"It's respectable at any rate," she snapped angrily.

Eyeing her closely he went on quickly:

"If yer good to me, I'll git ye in here as waitress."

Her eyes flashed indignantly.

"What do yer take me fer?" she demanded.

He gazed at her in silence for a few moments, and then insinuatingly he said:

"Does ye want to make a little easy money, Maggie? It'll buy ye some pretty things."

"Sure I do, but how?" she said cautiously. "Not in any honest way, I fear, if ye was to suggest it."

He laughed outright.

"Come, Maggie, ye musn't think so mean o' me. I'm painted worser than I am. If ye'll do what I say I'll slip ye a ten dollar bill, and it won't take ye any trouble at all."

"Well, what is it?" she demanded.

"Ye spoke just now of that girl ye know at the Burke-Smith's. I know her, too, but we're not acquainted. I've taken a fancy to her, and I ain't the nerve to get acquainted without a proper introduction. If ye'll jest bring us together it's a ten spot for yourn. Will ye?"

She shook her head.

"I'm not doing anythin' fer ye, Steve Bates, until I've seen ye reformed. It's for no good that ye want to know the girl. I'll not deliver one o' my

sex into the hands of a villain." Rising, she said: "Good-by, I'm going. If ye see Tom Kelly tell him what's happened."

Steve leaned over and caught her hand.

"Don't go like that, Maggie," he said, with pretended emotion. "Ye know what I ever thought o' ye. Ye're a married woman now, I know; you belong to another man, but I've never ceased to love ye——"

Maggie laughed heartily as she snatched her hand away. The boy was really funny. Good naturedly she said:

"Ye'd better not let Heinie hear ye say that. He's a hard hitter they say. Good night!"

As the girl walked away there was a derisive chuckle near by. Steve turned angrily. It was the red-headed stranger laughing at him again.

"That's some girl, eh?" grinned the hayseed.

Steve made no reply. Maggie's rebuff had not left him in the best of humor. Moreover, this stranger was getting badly on his nerves.

"Say—cut it out, will ye!" he exclaimed warningly. "I've just had enough of you. I don't know ye. Keep yer joshin' to yerself or I'll chuck ye out, d'ye see?"

To his surprise, the stranger, instead of getting angry, merely grinned the more. Rising from his

seat, he came over to Steve's table and, uninvited, took the chair which Maggie had vacated.

"Don't get mad, Steve, my boy!"

The youth stared at the man in bewilderment.

"Ye know me!" he exclaimed.

The stranger nodded. Good naturedly he said:

"Sure I know ye. Who don't know Steve Bates, sometimes called Steve the Slugger because of his smartness wid the boxing mitts. When ye was light weight champion didn't I see ye knock out 'Dutch' with as clever a blow as ever I saw in a prize ring! Hasn't I watched yer success workin' the street cars, reapin' a harvest of watches and scarf pins, smart as they make 'em? Even when the cops caught ye with the goods, ye'd slip out o' their hands again slippery as an eel. That fly 'gun' Rafferty thinks hisself smart. He went after ye, didn't he? But ye kept him guessin' all the time. Ye fooled him good an' plenty, didn't ye?"

Steve's chest expanded with pride. With a grin he answered:

"Yes, I fooled him all right. Rafferty's a stiff when it comes to gettin' me——"

"He is that," grinned the stranger. "Ye had him and all the other cops beaten to a frazzle. But one day they got ye good, didn't they?"

The youth looked glum. Awkwardly he replied:

"Rafferty took me off me guard. I owed him a grudge for that and to-day I got even. I knew he had his net out for Mike and Jim the Kid. But I got here before him."

The stranger chuckled.

"That's one on Rafferty, all right. When they did catch ye with the goods ye did yer bit in 'stir' like a man. And now yer out agin yer not likely to let the daisies grow under yer feet. I'll wager yer workin' on something good already."

His vanity thus gratified, the youth beamed with pleasure. Thawing out he said:

"Have a drink."

"Don't care if I do."

While the waiter hustled to get the liquor, Steve handed his new acquaintance a cigar.

"Belong down here," he inquired carelessly.

"Not exactly, I just dropped in," replied the stranger guardedly.

"What's yer line?" inquired the youth, eyeing his companion closely. As a rule he was suspicious of strangers, but this chap was so friendly and seemed harmless enough. Judging from his appearance he might be a farm hand from Jersey. Yet he talked thieves' lingo, although lacking the distinctive earmarks of the professional yeggman.

"Oh, I do a bit o' everything—whatever comes

handy," was the evasive reply. Quickly, as if to change the topic from becoming too personal, he said:

"One-lung Charlie ain't lookin' as well as he might is he? I'm afraid that cold o' hisn is settling on his chest for keeps."

Steve stared in astonishment.

"Ye know Charlie, too?" he exclaimed.

The man smiled.

"Sure, I know all the boys—Jim and Mike and Charlie. I'm nursie to all 'em kids. I look out they don't get hurt. I met Charlie at the door as he was going out. I said: 'Charlie,' says I, 'where t'hell is yer goin'?' 'To Boston,' says he. 'To Boston? Nixie,' says I. And I gave him a line o' talk that made him change his mind."

"Change his mind?" echoed Steve bewildered.

"Sure as ye know."

"He's not going to Boston on the bank job?"

"I told him it'd be wastin' his time."

"Why."

"I said he better ferget it if he wanted to keep out o' trouble."

Startled, Steve stared in speechless amazement at this apparent hayseed who dared to give advice to one of the most dangerous crooks of the underworld. There was something about the man he did

not like. A vague feeling of apprehension came over him that the man was not all he represented himself to be. Starting suddenly to his feet, he exclaimed:

"You told him—who the devil are you?"

For all reply, the stranger suddenly gave a tug at his sandy mustache, which came off in his hand, revealing a clean shaven, firm mouth. At the same instant he gave his reddish forelock a pull, and off came a wig, revealing a closely cropped head of dark hair, plentifully streaked with gray. The features were those of an athletic, resolute looking man of middle age. It was a shrewd face, not devoid of humor, but the face of a man accustomed to be obeyed and to dominate any situation, no matter how critical, in which he might be placed.

Steve, almost livid, rose instinctively to his feet.

"Jumping Jupiter!" he cried. "If it ain't Rafferty!"

The sleuth smiled. Reproachfully he said:

"An' to think ye didn't know me—what's the matter with ye, Steve, my boy? Don't ye know old Nursie with his business duds on?"

Little wonder that the mere mention of John Rafferty's name struck terror into the heart of the yeggman. During the five and twenty years that

he had been connected with the detective force, he had acquired a reputation as one of the cleverest sleuths this country has ever known. In the detection of crime he was a born genius. Absolutely without fear, he had to his credit a hundred brave acts performed while defending society from the desperate criminal classes, and, honest to a fault, he had earned the respect both of the public and his chief.

The youth fell back stupefied on his chair. Some of the bystanders who had witnessed the incident and recognized the detective gave the alarm, and as there were several present who had no wish to attract the special attention of the police there was a general scramble to the doors.

"The cops! the cops!" cried several voices.

A general stampede toward the doors set in, accompanied by cries of alarm.

Quickly Rafferty drew a revolver and jumped on a chair, from which height his resolute face could be seen by all.

"Not a man will stir!" he shouted. "The doors are locked. My men are outside!"

The fat proprietor, feeling secure in the political influence he enjoyed, ran up angry and flustered.

"What's this?" he began. "I'll have ye broke fer this. I'll——"

"Shut up," retorted Rafferty coolly. "Yer joint is pulled."

"What do you want? There's no one here."

A suspicion of a smile appeared at the corners of the detective's mouth.

"Ye don't say so," he said. "Perhaps ye don't know that two men, now hiding in your secret cellar, are escaped convicts from Sing Sing."

"You're mistaken. There's no one here!" protested the proprietor, with well-simulated indignation.

"All right, Sam!" grinned Rafferty. "I belave ye, but instead of giving me an argument suppose you lead the way to the secret cellar!"

CHAPTER IV

THE tenements of Poverty Hollow, notably the block of neglected and dilapidated buildings not inaptly nicknamed Consumption Row, were in as dangerous and deplorable a condition as it is possible for houses to be and not actually fall in. Built many years ago, before the tardy tenement laws were passed, and when sanitary plumbing was still an unknown science, the Smith flats were foul, repulsive rookeries, quite unfit for human habitation. But they had never been condemned and their millionaire owner, who lived luxuriously in a fashionable quarter uptown, did not concern herself about them, so long as the income from the investment was regular and sufficient.

The street itself was as filthy and degraded a spot as any to be found in the slums. The roadway, paved with greasy cobble stones sadly in need of repair, was full of puddles of blackish, stagnant water. The narrow sidewalks, never swept except by occasional showers of rain, were littered with de-

caying vegetables and disgusting refuse of every description. From the depths of every open doorway and cellar came a stench that cried to Heaven. The rusty, rickety fire escapes were jammed with soiled bedding or hung with tattered washing. Hundreds of dirty-faced children with frail little bodies, pinched, prematurely old faces, precocious and vicious, grinning like apes and swearing like troopers, swarmed everywhere.

Inside, the tenements were even more repellent than their sinister exteriors suggested. Indeed, it seemed incredible that there could be found human beings willing to live in this hideous squalor, these cold and comfortless rooms. In the walls were wide cracks, through which entered every icy wind that blew. In the damp, moldy ceilings were great holes, from which large chunks of plaster fell every time a wagon rumbled past, shaking the house to its foundation. The windows, obstructed by cobwebs and filth of all kinds, looked as if they had never been cleaned, and in many places the missing or broken pieces of glass had been covered with paper, giving the house a patched-up appearance, as if it had been through a fight. The walls of the dark, narrow halls were grimy and greasy, and the staircases, with their broken handrails and yawning holes in the treads, afforded dangerous pitfalls for

the unwary. Pervading all was an indescribable, intolerable stench of sewage and decaying garbage. In short, the place was an ideal culture ground for every malignant disease germ that ever made war on the human race. Here the White Plague was King, none could dispute his domain or stop to count his victims. Here typhoid, scarlet, malaria, and every other fever to which the flesh is heir had undisputed sway.

Maggie Schultz and her husband occupied two rooms four flights up, to the rear. They were a little more favored than some of the other tenants, for at least they looked out on a back yard instead of on to an air shaft, but at best it was dingy and comfortless. The floor of the hall was so rotten that here and there the boards had actually broken through, and the staircase balustrade was so rickety that it threatened to give way every time any one laid hand on it. The plastering for the most part had fallen away from the walls and ceiling, and what remained was black with filth. On each landing was a lavatory with a dirty zinc basin, used by all the tenants of that floor.

The apartments were as bare and cheerless as one can conceive. The Schultzes had one living room, which did duty as kitchen and parlor both, and this opened directly on the landing. It had two fair-

sized windows, one overlooking the back yard, another leading to the rear fire escape. A door at the opposite side led into the bedroom. The furnishings, the best they could afford, were naturally of the most meager description. There was a small cooking stove with shelves over it, holding crockery and cooking utensils, a plain kitchen table and a few chairs. Near a shaft window was a rickety bureau with drawers, on which stood a few books, magazines and a sewing basket. The floor was practically bare save for a few ragged remnants of carpet thrown here and there. Yet, notwithstanding the extreme poverty of the place, there was apparent everywhere unmistakable evidences of a woman's unceasing effort to reclaim her home to an appearance of cheerfulness and neatness. The floor, if bare, was scrupulously clean, the saucepans literally shone from dint of constant scouring and polishing; there was not a speck of dust to be seen on the chairs, a clean white cloth covered the table, and on the bureau stood a vase with flowers.

Such as it was, Maggie Schultz loved her home. It was all she had in life, that and her affection for Heinie, her stalwart longshoreman husband. They were a sober, thrifty, domesticated couple, entirely too good for their wretched surroundings, yet for some reason which they themselves were unable to

explain, they seemed unable to better their condition, or to get out of the rut into which they had fallen. They detested the neighborhood, but rents were a little cheaper than elsewhere and, besides, it was convenient for Heinie, who had to live near his place of work. Even living as they did, economically, shabbily, it was a constant struggle to make both ends meet. The cost of living was so high that it took all Heinie earned to buy the barest necessities, for wages were low and employment uncertain. Recently a strike had threatened, but the men had no certainty of winning, and it might only make matters worse. Sometimes Maggie was able to make a little extra by doing some washing. Very popular with all her neighbors, they frequently put jobs in her way. Mrs. Kelly had been a devoted friend ever since the accident to poor little Mary, and Mrs. Bates, who lived on the floor above, often had more than she could attend to, and let her have it. This little extra money was a great assistance and helped the young couple to tide over many a difficulty.

Three months has passed since the day of the automobile accident. Happily the child was not as badly hurt as was at first believed, and after a few weeks in the hospital the mother had been able to bring it home, much to the joy of Maggie, who

could not have been more attached to the little girl had she been her own daughter. The Kellys lived on the same floor as the Bateses, and it was there, during the long period of convalescence, that Maggie spent most of her time. Mrs. Burke-Smith, whose car had been the cause of the accident, had tried to make amends in the only way she knew. She had not yet called to see the little victim as she had promised, but she had sent her niece, and also provided liberally for the mother by writing out a good-sized cheque.

Unfortunately, Mrs. Burke-Smith went about all her charitable work in the wrong way. Like many rich people, she secretly despised the working class, almost denying that they were human beings. In her attitude toward them she was arrogant, and patronizing. This naturally enough was quickly resented by the very people she wanted to help. She incurred their enmity rather than their respect, and as a frigid unfriendliness was usually very noticeable each time she came in contact with them, the millionaire's wife put it down to stubborn obstinacy of the poor and their instinctive animosity against those better situated than themselves, not realizing that it was her own unnecessarily offensive demeanor that was alone to blame.

With her niece Alice it was quite the contrary.

Of a naturally sympathetic, amiable disposition, she was one of those sweet, unaffected girls—seldom met with in these selfish, sordid days—whose hand is ever extended to those in trouble, irrespective of social position. With a smile and a good word for everybody, the young girl made friends right and left. The poor people of the neighborhood literally worshipped her, and as she was greatly interested and an active participant in all the movements for improving the condition of the poor—sacrificing her society pleasures to devote her time to Settlement work—she had been helpful in bringing about many local betterments, which had won for her the lasting gratitude of those benefited.

Maggie saw a good deal of her, also of Dr. Taylor, who called regularly to see how little Mary was getting on. By this time the stevedore's wife was not blind to the fact that the young physician was paying Miss Alice marked attention. Following her like a shadow, he was invariably to be found around on one pretext or another whenever the young girl, engaged in her Settlement work, was making one of her periodical tours through the slums, and she appeared to be equally attracted to him. Some of their meetings, now at the Schultz flat, again in Mrs. Kelly's rooms, apparently only accidental, were often the result of carefully laid plans, and thus the ro-

mance of the young people thrived unsuspected by, and right under the plutocratic nose of, Mrs. Burke-Smith, who, having much higher aspirations for her niece, would have been scandalized at the idea of her throwing herself away on an obscure, impecunious medico.

Meantime, there had come into Maggie Schultz's prosaic humdrum existence, a new and all-absorbing interest which from now on overshadowed everything else. In one thrilling, heart-throbbing instant the longshoreman's wife was changed from a self-possessed, patient, sensible little *haus-frau* into a peevish, fractious woman as full of nerves, contradictions, anxieties and hysteria of which her sex is capable. One instant, as a result of being vouchsafed a long prayed for yet undesired blessing, she was carried to dizzy heights of blissful expectancy and joy, only to be dashed down the next moment into an abyss of gloomy despondency. All her life she had regarded motherhood as the most beautiful, the most holy of human joys. Ever since her marriage she had secretly longed to have a child, yet in her more practical, critical moods she had readily recognized how foolish was any such desire. It would not only be foolish, but wicked even. Why should she give herself and Heinie a heavier burden than they had to carry at present? What right had

they to bring a child into the world unless they were sure of being able to provide for it, to feed and clothe and protect it? When she saw the horrible conditions to which the babies of the neighborhood were born—the foul air, lack of sunshine, poor milk, insufficient nourishment, bad sewage—it sickened her. Was it a wonder that death claimed nearly every little victim, and that in the homes of the tenements one could count almost as many little white coffins as cradles? No, it would be wrong, a sin. She and Heinie had often talked the matter over, and they had both come to the same conclusion. Heinie was even more decided about it than she was. He would not hear of it. He grew violently angry when it was discussed. No, they must not think of children until the prospects were brighter, and God alone knew when things would improve—perhaps never in this world. When, therefore, one day she realized that she had no longer any say in the matter, that the good Lord had selected her also to be one of the mothers of the race, her first emotion was one of ecstatic joy. At last, at last, she would be able to clasp in her arms a little one of her own, to caress it and watch over it, to see its first little cooing smile, to hear its innocent lips lisp “mother.”

Then suddenly her happiness was followed by

alarm. In the first moment of hysterical anxiety she exaggerated everything. What would Heinie say? He would be furious. Hadn't he expressly forbidden it? He must not know. He was a good, considerate husband as a rule, but when he was ugly she was mortally afraid of him. Hadn't he once threatened to strangle her if she ever even thought of having a child? No—she could not tell him. She must hide it from him—as long as she could. He would be so furious that he might beat her, kill her or worse still—leave her forever. Then what could she do—without Heinie? That would be the end of everything. She would kill herself.

For days she went about like a woman demented, avoiding people, refusing to eat, complaining that she was ill, yet unwilling to consult a physician. Every one noticed the change, but no one, not even Heinie, knew what ailed her. It was her own secret, and she hid it successfully from the world. Yet the knowledge of it changed her character completely. From a jovial, good-natured, frank, young woman, she all at once became gloomy, morbid, fretful, secretive. She began furtively to save money, every penny she could scrape together, often going without a midday meal, so that her little hoard might be slowly increased. One day, while out on an errand some distance from home, she had accidentally

PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
LIBRARY

passed a second-hand furniture shop around which was collected quite a crowd. There had been a fire, and they were selling the damaged goods at auction, practically giving the burned and scorched things away for whatever they would bring. She stopped, not because she needed anything or had money to spend, but just out of idle curiosity, to watch the bidding. All at once the auctioneer, with a flippant jest, put up an article, the sight of which made her heart leap up into her mouth. It was a baby's cradle, of poor construction, but still intact, although its sides were badly charred. It might be just what she wanted. Timidly she made a bid—half of what the auctioneer asked—and to her surprise and consternation it was knocked down to her. The bystanders looked at her curiously, and some women smiled as they whispered together, but, so far away from home, there was no one there to recognize her. Trembling with excitement, she paid the trifle the cradle cost and, leaving the store, made a bargain with a truckman to deliver it at her house, at an hour when she was sure Heinie and all prying neighbors would be away. Once in the house it was easy to keep it from observation or, at the worst, she could explain that she thought it would be useful as a general receptacle for her wash.

With the coming into her home of the cradle she

grew calmer. The agonizing doubts of a few weeks before had been succeeded by a patient resignation. She was sensible enough to reason that crying would do no good, and she even began to look forward with some impatience to the time when the truth could no longer be concealed. Meantime, the charred cradle became the one object of her constant surveillance and devotion. In it she treasured up every little bit of lace, every little ribbon on which she could lay her hand, secreting them eagerly, stealthily, as a miser hides his gold, and sometimes in the night when Heinie, tired out by the day's strenuous toil, was sound asleep, she would get noiselessly out of bed, draw the cradle from the corner, and in silent ecstasy fondle the little things that might one day adorn her baby.

One morning she had been out to the store to buy some things for the house. The fire was getting low, and they needed some wood. She was feeling terribly depressed. Money was scarcer than ever; the outlook was black. The longshoremen were about to go out on strike, and well she knew what that meant—no pay envelope for Heinie at the end of the week. He could not be a scab, if the other boys went out he would have to quit, too. She was not blaming him, but it was hard on her. To think that a new life should be brought into the world at

such a critical time as this! She trembled as she thought of having to tell Heinie. Yet there was no way out of it. The truth could not be concealed much longer.

Her purchases completed she returned home, carrying her shawl over her shoulder like a sack, filled with kindling and a few pieces of coal. She had left her rooms empty, but when she returned she found her neighbor, Mrs. Bates, with her wash tub planted in the middle of the floor. The Irishwoman, a muscular, good-natured-looking woman with iron-gray hair falling untidily all over her face, looked up as the stevedore's wife entered.

"Oh, there ye are!" she exclaimed, with a rich "auld counthry" brogue.

"Hello," returned Maggie, with a wan smile.

Crossing wearily to the stove, the young woman emptied on to the floor the contents of the shawl and, getting down on her knees, began silently to feed the fire.

"I'm jest after bringin' me washin' in here," exclaimed Mrs. Bates apologetically. "The faucet in the upstairs hall ain't runnin' well, and me place is chilly——"

She stopped as if expecting a word of sympathy, but Maggie was too much absorbed in her own troubles to be able to give heed to those of her neighbor.

She went on tending the fire, saying nothing, until at last Mrs. Bates, surprised at her silence, broke out again:

"I said me own place is chilly. Me boy Steve is jest after takin' the stuffin' out of the windy pane."

"Drinkin' again?" murmured Maggie listlessly, without looking up.

Mrs. Bates jerked back her head indignantly.

"Sure now, he's just after joinin' the Salvation Army—so he says."

Maggie gave her shoulders a contemptuous shrug.

"Huh!" she exclaimed, absent-mindedly.

Laying aside her scrubbing brush, Mrs. Bates put her arms akimbo. Mimicking her neighbor, she said:

"Huh! Say, but ye're gettin' absent-minded! Don't ye hear nothin' I say to ye lately?"

Startled, the young woman looked up. Quietly she replied:

"I—I was just fixin' the fire. What did ye say Steve did?"

"I says he was joinin' the Salvation Army an' wants a Bible, so he jerks out the one I had pluggin' up the busted window."

Maggie stared, horror stricken.

"Ye was pluggin' a busted winder with a Bible?" she exclaimed.

"Divil a bit o' wind ever came through that hole," grinned the Irishwoman.

Maggie shook her head. Gravely she said:

"That ain't no way to treat a Bible. Miss Alice gave it to ye to git comfort out of."

"Leave me to git comfort out of it," chuckled the washwoman, as she started in scrubbing again.

Maggie was thoughtful for a moment. Then slowly she asked:

"What's Steve up to now—joinin' the army?"

She did not know why she took the trouble to inquire, for she was not interested in what Steve did one way or the other. She had not seen the youth since the night she had accidentally run across him at the Dead Rat, and she had no wish to encourage him. It was difficult to always avoid him because of her close association with his mother, but she had always made it quite plain that he must keep away. Heinie could not bear the sight of him, and had threatened to do him up if ever he caught him loafing near the place.

Mrs. Bates snickered as she answered:

"What makes any man chase religion but chasin' a woman? Lord, I wish he had the drink habit instead. It's not half as dangerous."

As she spoke, the door leading to the outside hall was pushed open, and Steve sauntered in. The

youth was flashily dressed as usual, and in the lapel of his coat was a button photograph of a woman. He wore his derby hat tilted over on the one side of his head, and a lighted cigar was in his mouth. He stood eyeing the two women with insolent amusement. His mother looked up at him.

"We was jest talkin' about ye gettin' religion, Steve."

The youth made a grimace. Chewing his cigar, he retorted:

"I'm willin' to get anythin', so long's I get that blonde squab."

"Oh, that's yer reason!" interrupted Maggie scornfully.

He laughed carelessly as he answered:

"Maybe I ain't got her on the run! We'll be doin' the Turkey Trot at the Rat before midnight."

Nudging the young woman's arm, he pointed to the photo button. Tauntingly he added: "Pipe that!"

Maggie scarcely looked up. Indignantly she exclaimed:

"Ye oughter be ashamed o' yerself. I bet she's a good girl!"

"It's the only kind I have on me staff," he replied airily. Then changing his teasing tone, he continued more earnestly:

"No, Angel Face, you're the only good girl I know. Yer remember what I told ye that night at the Rat. Any time yet git tired o' lookin' at that crazy Dutch husband o' yours——"

His mother held up a warning hand.

"Shut up, Steve!" she said sharply. "Git upstairs now. Heinie don't want ye in his place, nor talkin' to Maggie anyhow."

The youth laughed. He knew well enough that the lanky stevedore had no love for him. If he came in and found him talking to Maggie there would likely be a fight, but he cared little enough about that. He was well able to look after himself. If he had taken the trouble to drop in on Maggie now there was a good reason. Ever since that night in the Dead Rat he had been thinking of that slick job uptown. The suddenness and unexpectedness of Rafferty's raid had for the time discouraged him from making any attempt to carry out his plan, but times were harder than ever. He was dead broke. He really needed the stuff. There was no reason why he shouldn't turn the trick. But he could not work alone. He must find some one to help him, some one who knew the inside of the house. He had not been idle all these weeks. He had looked carefully over the ground. The girl Maggie knew had left the family, so there was no help to be expected

in that quarter. Then another idea had struck him. Why not get Maggie herself to help him? She was miserably poor, all women like to make a little extra pin money. All she would have to do would be to give him the lay of the house. If she'd go into the scheme he could pull it off, and she'd get her rake-off. To sound her on the deal was the real object of his call at the Schultz flat that morning. Turning to Maggie, he said good-naturedly:

"Hear that? Yer Dutch husband says I can't talk to ye."

She nodded and, without looking up, answered:

"He means it, too——"

The youth grinned as he exclaimed:

"Ain't it hell to be hated?"

His mother motioned to him to be going. Crossly she said:

"What-cher want here, anyhow, Steve?"

The young man made an upward gesture with thumb and forefinger.

"It's freezin' up there, and ye've used up all the kindlin' for toothpicks."

His mother turned to Maggie. Amiably she asked:

"Maggie, can ye spare the boy some kindlin', so he'll get out?"

The young woman made no answer. Absorbed in her own thoughts, apparently she had not heard.

"Can ye?" repeated Mrs. Bates, in a louder tone.

Maggie looked up at her in a dazed, stupid kind of way.

"Huh?" she said.

"Have ye any kindlin'?" asked the Irishwoman.

Maggie shook her head, as she answered:

"Just put the last piece on the fire."

Steve made a grimace. Looking around for a chair, and finding none available, without a moment's hesitation he threw down the freshly washed clothes from a soap box on which they had been carefully piled, and flopped himself down on it, exclaiming:

"Then I sits here till me mother gets the strength to chop some more!"

Finding the seat wet, he immediately jumped up again, turned the box upside down and sat on the dry end. Mrs. Bates, speechless with anger, picked up the clothes and, pushing her son away, replaced the soiled things in the tub. Recovering her voice, she exclaimed indignantly:

"Stevey, ye divil ye—loafin' around here mornings, makin' more work fer me. Ye oughter to be well ashamed o' yerself! Go on now, git out o' here!"

Instead of obeying or being at all awed by his mother's wrath, the youth merely grinned and, seating himself on the table, lit another cigar. His mother looked helplessly at Maggie. Weakly she said:

"Let him stay a few minutes until I finish me washin'."

Maggie shook her head listlessly. Indifferently she said:

"I don't care what he does."

Steve laughed.

"You little dare devil!" he said mockingly.

Mrs. Bates's eyes wandered round the room. It was important that they should have some wood, as the fire upstairs was out. Wasn't there an old box somewhere they could chop up? Suddenly her eyes lighted on the cradle hidden away in the corner. She had seen it many times before and, knowing there could be no possible use for it, always thought that Maggie had picked it up somewhere with the idea of using it for kindling.

"Say, Maggie," she exclaimed, pointing to the corner, "what's ye doin' with that baby's cradle?"

Startled, the young woman looked up.

"What cradle?" she demanded.

"Why, that over there—it's no use. Let Stevey break it up fer ye."

Maggie shook her head. Sullenly she said:

"I ain't choppin' that up."

Mrs. Bates looked puzzled.

"Ain't ye usin' it fer kindlin'?" she demanded.

"No."

"Sure—ye can't sell it," persisted the old Irishwoman. "It ain't worth nothin'—there's plenty of cradles layin' empty around here."

Vexed at being denied what she wanted, the old Irishwoman relapsed into a sulky silence and resumed washing vigorously, while the stevedore's wife, rising to her feet, paced the floor restlessly. Hard at work, Mrs. Bates at first paid no attention to her, but as Maggie continued to walk restlessly up and down she could not help noticing it. Stopping scrubbing, she glared at her curiously.

"What's the matter with ye?" she demanded.

"Nothin'," answered the young woman surlily.

Mrs. Bates said nothing and resumed her washing, while Maggie continued to pace the room, paying not the slightest attention to Steve, who sat smoking in silence. All at once the young woman stopped short. Turning to the Irishwoman, she asked:

"How's that sick kid downstairs?"

Mrs. Bates shook her head.

"Sure, if he's still alive, he's nearly dead."

Involuntarily the young woman shuddered.

"An' only three years old!" she murmured.

The Irishwoman sighed as she went on dolefully:

"Yes—it could have spent the time better never bein' born at all. What's the use?" There was a half choking sound in Maggie's throat as the old woman went on: "I saw the doctor downstairs just now in the hall. And now they're comin' fer it with an ambulance when the poor little divil's too near dead to enjoy the ride."

"Don't nobody know what ails it?" asked Maggie, after a pause.

"Sure it's sick fer a bit o' sunshine and breath of fresh air and proper food," replied the elder woman.

Steve jumped up with a gesture of impatience. He had listened long enough. This line of talk about sick kids got on his sensitive nerves. With a gesture of disgust he made for the door.

"Oh, youse people make me tired!" he exclaimed peevishly.

"Where ye goin', Stevey?" asked his mother.

"Upstairs where it's cold."

His mother pointed to the wet clothes.

"Steve, will ye take this basket o' wash upstairs before ye go out?"

Making no attempt to comply with his mother's wishes, the youth merely grinned at her. Insolently he replied:

"I'd like to, ma, but I couldn't lift a dollar bill before breakfast!"

"Go on, then!" she said crossly. "Faith, do ye ever do anythin' yer poor mother asks ye? Ah, git out o' my sight!"

The young man laughed mockingly. Turning on his heel, he exclaimed:

"Sure, it's me to the street for a stiff drink and a fat breakfast."

He was about to close the door behind him, when suddenly there was a whistle on the stairs outside and a man's voice was heard calling:

"Hey, upstairs, there!"

Stepping outside, Steve glanced over the balustrade and called out a greeting. Returning into the room, he grumbled:

"It's that fly hospital doctor."

The next moment Dr. Taylor entered, carrying in his arms a bulky burden.

CHAPTER V

THE young physician, tall and athletic looking, handsome in the spotless, white linen uniform of the hospital staff, came in carrying gingerly what appeared to be a bundle of blankets. The women stared, wondering what it could be, but they were not kept long in suspense. A faint, plaintive cry, which came from within the inner folds, soon told them the nature of the burden.

Maggie nodded to the newcomer in a dull, listless way, but Mrs. Bates, more cordial, quickly dropped her scrubbing brush and, drying her hands, advanced to greet him.

"Good morning, everybody!" exclaimed the doctor cheerfully. "Will you keep this kid here while the mother goes to the hospital with the other one?"

Mrs. Bates snatched the child from his hands. With pretended indignation, she cried:

"Sure, it's a great way you've got of holdin' a baby! Gimme it." Holding the bundle so that

she could see the infant's face, she went on: "Ain't it a fat, rosy one? Don't be triflin' with this child, doctor. It's the only healthy one in the buildin'." Holding the baby out to the stevedore's wife, who stood as one transfixed, she added: "Put it away, Maggie, where he can't get at it."

The young woman took the infant, and Mrs. Bates, returning to her wash tub, looked up at the doctor and laughed. With mock surprise she exclaimed:

"Carryin' a baby around with its head below its feet! Whoever heard tell o' such a thing? Was ye tryin' to teach him to skin the cat? Shure, ye'd better practice raisin' a family before you try curin' it!"

With infinite tenderness and solicitude, Maggie had carefully placed the child in Mrs. Bates' wash basket. This done, she looked up at the doctor with an inquiring, wistful expression. Timidly she asked:

"Say, mister, what ails that kid that it's goin' to the hospital?"

Before answering the question, the physician stopped to light a cigarette. Then, as he carelessly threw the match away, he said:

"Oh—like all the rest—improper sanitation."

Mrs. Bates stopped short at her work. Bran-

dishing an arm all covered with soapsuds, she exclaimed scornfully:

"Improper sanytashun! A hell of a lot you know!"

Instead of showing annoyance the doctor merely laughed.

"What do you call it?" he asked.

"Sanytashun!" she went on indignantly. "Some of them dood babies uptown catch improper sanytashun from ridin' too fast in autymobiles and overfeedin', but divil a desease with a name like that will yez foind in this district! That baby's sufferin' from a severe attack of being born down here where he shouldn't be born——"

Maggie, who had listened with pale, anxious face, clasped her hands together nervously. Her mouth twitched painfully as she turned to her neighbor and exclaimed angrily:

"It ain't so, yer nutty on that!" Addressing the doctor, she asked: "Somethin' wrong inside it?"

He nodded as he replied laconically:

"I guess about everything is wrong inside."

Eagerly seizing on this meagre scrap of encouragement, the young woman turned on her neighbor.

"There, ye see!" she exclaimed triumphantly.

But Mrs. Bates was not worsted so easily. Re-

turning to the attack, she said to the doctor viciously:

"No doubt, ye'll soon be takin' out some of the child's plumbin'."

The young man shrugged his shoulders. Carelessly he answered:

"It's the plumbing here in the house that's doing the business, if anyone should ask you. No child can stand it. They die like flies. It's a sin to bring them into the world."

Maggie choked back a sob. To hide her confusion she went over to the fire, and stooping down under pretence of putting on more coal, stared moodily into the glowing embers. Steve, at the same moment, made for the front door. He had tried to take interest in the conversation, but gave it up in despair. Impatiently he exclaimed:

"Oh, Lord! You people make me tired!"

"Where are ye going, Steve?" demanded his mother.

"To the saloon for a drink to cheer me up. Yer a healthy bunch of grave-diggers!"

He disappeared, banging the door violently behind him. The doctor, who had watched the scene with amusement, laughed as he turned to go. With a friendly gesture he said:

"Well, I'll see you all later."

"Good day, little docthor," said Mrs. Bates with a mock curtsy.

The physician was half way through the door when he stopped short, as if struck by a sudden thought.

"Oh, by the way," he said awkwardly, "you haven't seen two ladies and a gentleman here to-day?" Looking towards Maggie he added quickly: "You know them—Mrs. Burke-Smith and her niece, Miss Alice. They were to come here to-day with Mr. Howland, their adviser. Mrs. Burke-Smith wants to do some investigating on her own hook."

Mrs. Bates looked up from her tub. Angrily she exclaimed:

"I suppose ye mane some of them charity folks what come wanderin' round——"

The doctor nodded.

"Precisely. There's two ladies and a gentleman——"

"And one's a young lady," interrupted Mrs. Bates slyly.

"Yes—that's it—Miss Alice," he laughed.

"It's all right," chuckled the washerwoman. "They're expected shortly."

The physician's face brightened.

"How do you know?" he demanded.

"From the way ye're loafin' around," she replied promptly.

The young man laughed awkwardly.

"Nothing gets by you, Bates, does it?"

Again he started for the door, leaving his medicine case on the table, as if unconsciously.

"Well, so long," he said jocularly. "I'm busy."

The Irishwoman, a roguish grin on her face, called him back. Turning round he said:

"Eh?"

Mrs. Bates winked at Maggie, who, still crouching on the floor gazing despondently into the fire, paid no attention.

"Ain't he the cute one?" she chuckled. Pointing to the box, she added: "I suppose it's a shame to tell ye, ye're forgittin' yer little pill-box!"

The physician tried to look surprised, but it was a palpable effort.

"Gee whiz!" he exclaimed, hardly able to restrain a smile.

The Irishwoman mimicked him.

"Gee whiz! Do ye note the sudden start of surprise? He was savin' that for the young lady! Sure—I've a better excuse for you than that——"

Picking up the wash basket in which Maggie had placed the baby, she held it out to him.

"Here's me basket o' wash with the child on top.

Carry it upstairs to me place. I'm thinkin' the poor little mite has got a high fever. When yer friends come in ye can just be bringin' him back to life."

The young man laughed. Protestingly he exclaimed:

"But see here——"

Giving him a good-natured nudge in the ribs, the Irishwoman said significantly:

"Drop in here for a safety pin. The young lady may have one about."

It was a good plan, yet one that had its weak points. The young man looked at the infant and scratched his head. Dubiously he said:

"Suppose they ask to see the kid—he don't look very feverish——"

"Wait till ye've had him awhile," she grinned.

The doctor laughed heartily as he started for the door carrying the basket.

"You're a wonder!" he smiled as he waved his hand in farewell.

The stevedore's wife, who, until now, had been a silent and uninterested listener to the badinage, suddenly looked up from the fireplace.

"Say, doctor," she exclaimed timidly.

Once more the young man halted.

"What?" he said amiably.

The young woman rose and went up to him. Her

face was pale and thoughtful, as if some hidden grief was weighing heavy on her mind. Looking up at him she asked earnestly:

"What made that other baby sick? Ye ain't told me yet."

"Just living down here—that's all," he replied carelessly. "It's enough to kill a horse."

She knew he would say that, yet she had not been able to resist the impulse to ask him. Yet his answer was like a knife thrust through her heart. Quickly she averted her face so he could not see the tears which had suddenly filled her eyes. She said no more, and he went out with his burden, followed to the landing by the Irishwoman. Warningly Mrs. Bates cried:

"Be careful now—don't slip on them stairs."

Suddenly, as she watched him proceed, there was a crash. He stumbled and nearly fell with basket and baby. Recovering himself, he only laughed and proceeded safely to the upper floor.

"I knew ye'd do it!" she called out scornfully. Coming back to the room she grumbled: "An' the likes o' him wantin' to marry!"

Maggie breathed a sigh of relief. All the time the doctor had been there she had felt as though she would stifle. She must be alone to think, to plan. She was angry at what he had said about

the babies. What did he know? Excitedly she burst out:

"Other kids is born here! This place is good enough for 'em to live in, ain't it?"

Having taken up her scrubbing brushes again, and resumed work at her wash tub, Mrs. Bates had given the matter no further thought. The young woman's exclamation made her look up in surprise. She could not understand her persistence. Impatiently she exclaimed:

"Oh, Maggie, will ye forget it? What's ailin' ye?"

But the young woman was not to be pacified so easily. Anxiously she went on:

"They're growin' up all right an' they're happy an' good as any other kids, ain't they?" Receiving no reply, she raised her voice. "Well—ain't they?"

Up to her arms in soapsuds, Mrs. Bates shook her head.

"Yes, look at 'em with their little bits of weazened bodies an' chalky faces! Do ye 'spose any-one of 'em could be a policeman? Then look at my boy Steve—a bouncer in a dance hall—can lick anyone. He's no tenement baby. He was borned and raised in Wyoming. Sure, a kid from here wouldn't stand no chance wid him."

Maggie made no answer and remained silent for

a few moments. Then, stifling back a sob, she murmured:

"I guess ye're right."

Unable to control herself, fearing that if she stayed any longer she would betray what was foremost in her thoughts, she walked quickly into the next room. The washerwoman, who had noticed her agitation, looked after her in undisguised amazement. Calling after her she cried:

"Good Lord! What's ailin' ye to-day, Maggie?"

There was no response, only a distant, muffled noise like the sound of someone sobbing. Pausing in her work for a moment, in puzzled thought, the Irishwoman muttered to herself:

"I wonder——"

The sentence was not completed, for at that moment the front door opened and her son entered. Having had his breakfast, the youth now wished to go upstairs to their flat and have a nap, only he found it too cold for his comfort. Leaning idly against the door jamb, he grumbled:

"Say, Mud, how about some kindlin'! Get busy, will ye?"

The Irishwoman did not look up from her work. Crossly she said:

"If ye was a good lad ye'd be going out in the street and gettin' mother some——"

The youth laughed as if any such suggestion was an excellent joke. Good-humoredly he said:

"If I was a good lad I'd be takin' yer wash home Saturday nights instead of me dame to the theayter."

Looking up from her washtub, Mrs. Bates shook her fist at him. Warningly she exclaimed:

"It's a dangerous road yer travelin', Steve. Ye ought to be plying an honest trade like Heinie. Sure it's breaking me heart to see ye loafin' at yer age."

"Oh, hell!" retorted the youth with a sulky scowl.

"I try to take pride in ye," went on his mother with a snivel, "but yer a good-for-nothin' lad and it'll be the end o' me some day."

Approaching her, the youth patted his mother good-naturedly on the back.

"Oh, dry up!" he exclaimed irrelevantly. "I ain't a dub. Some day I'll set ye up in a sunny flat and buy you phoney curls till yer head aches. How's that?"

His mother turned and looked at him anxiously.

"Where do ye mean to git the money, Steve?"

The youth shrugged his shoulders. Evasively he answered:

"Oh, don't you fret. I can look out for my own business."

Alarmed, the Irishwoman exclaimed warningly:
"Steve—take care——"

Brushing her roughly aside, the youth retorted rudely:

"Now hustle me up some kindlin', will ye?" Looking about the room, he demanded: "Where's the cradle ye two was gassin' about?"

"Don't be takin' that now," protested his mother; "ye heard Maggie say she wanted it——"

But the young man gave no heed. Reaching behind the stove he picked up an axe and moved toward the corner. Angrily Mrs. Bates exclaimed:

"Stevey, d'ye hear what I'm tellin' ye?"

But he paid no attention. Stooping down quickly he pulled out the wooden cradle.

"Aw! forget it," he laughed insolently. "D'ye think I'm goin' to freeze?"

In despair the Irishwoman raised her voice with the idea of summoning help.

"Maggie!" she called out. "He's smashin' yer cradle!"

The words had not died away on her lips when the bedroom door was flung violently open and the stevedore's wife rushed in. Her large dark eyes ablaze with fury, she cried menacingly:

"You let that cradle alone!"

The youth made a brutal rejoinder, and was about

to smash it up in spite of her, when suddenly he caught a glimpse of the cradle's contents. Lowering his axe he suddenly went off into peals of coarse laughter.

"Say—this ain't no place fer a young feller," he snickered. "Why didn't yer tell me before?"

The stevedore's wife had thrown herself protectively across her cherished cradle. Burying her face in it she sobbed like a child.

Dropping the axe on the floor, Steve went toward the door, still convulsed with laughter. His mother, leaving her washtubs, went quietly over to the young woman. Laying a hand sympathetically on her shoulder, she leaned over and glanced into the cradle to see what had so amused her son. Catching a glimpse of the contents she gave a start. Now she understood.

"Good Lord Almighty!" she exclaimed, awe-stricken.

Before she could say anything there was the noise of heavy footsteps on the landing outside. Steve, who was about to open the door, stopped laughing and drew back. His mother, alarmed, jumped up.

"It's Heinie!" she exclaimed anxiously.

Maggie, startled, staggered quickly to her feet and pushed the cradle hurriedly back in its place in the corner.

"God!" she exclaimed. "If he ever saw this!"

Anxious to avoid a meeting between the stevedore and her son, Mrs. Bates pushed the youth towards the door.

"Beat it, quick!" she whispered. "Get out! If Heinie sees ye here he'll think you're tryin' to start somethin' with Maggie. Get out, will ye?—or there'll be a fight."

The youth went quickly to the door, but it was too late. There was no time to get away. Coming back into the room, he exclaimed with bravado:

"Well—I'm lookin' fer it."

The door was thrown open and Schultz appeared. About five and thirty, tall and muscular looking, with a pleasant, candid face, Heinie Schultz looked the typical American workingman of the better kind—self-reliant, clean-cut, sober, industrious. Of German descent, he had all the good stolid qualities of his Teutonic ancestry, allied with the energy and resourcefulness of the progressive Yankee. He was of the type of men who, given a fair opportunity, are bound to rise in the world. He gave a slight start of surprised annoyance at seeing Steve, who stood grinning at him defiantly, and then his glance fell on his wife, who, inwardly terrified at his scrutiny, was making desperate efforts to conceal all

marks of her agitation. That something was amiss he guessed at once—firstly by Steve's presence, secondly by his wife's manner. In a quiet, dangerous voice he inquired:

"What's the row?"

As no one answered, he crossed the room to where his wife was standing. Her face was averted. Taking her by the arm, he turned her round and saw her red eyes. Impatiently he demanded:

"What ye cryin' about?"

"I—ain't been cryin' " she murmured.

"Yes, ye have," he insisted; "what about?"

"Why, no," she said, shaking her head. "I——"
Mrs. Bates came to the rescue.

"Why, it was nothin', Heinie—she——"

As she stopped short, at a loss to invent a plausible excuse, Heinie's keen, suspicious glance went from her to her son, who, surly and defiant, stood silent in the background. The stevedore nodded as if he understood, and an expression of grim determination came into his face. Not taking his eyes off the youth he said meaningly:

"I see." Turning to his wife and motioning toward the inner room he added: "You go in there for a minute."

Knowing well by his manner what was coming, and not knowing what might happen if the two men

got fighting, Maggie tried to appease him. Imploringly she exclaimed:

"Heinie, I——"

Gently, but firmly, he pushed her toward the bedroom.

"Go ahead," he said.

While the young woman moved slowly away, Mrs. Bates, distracted from anxiety, made frantic motions to her son to clear out, but with a shrug of his shoulders and a smile of contempt, the young crook lounged against a chair, coolly awaiting developments. When his wife had disappeared, the stevedore turned quickly and, clenching his fist, approached the youth. As he advanced Steve recoiled a few steps and, retreating slowly in the direction of the fire, put his hand behind him and quietly took the iron lifter from the stove. Mrs. Bates, seeing that a fight was imminent, threw herself between the two men. Addressing the stevedore she cried frantically:

"He just came in fer some kindlin', Heinie. Don't start nothin'!"

But the angry husband, his temper now fairly up, paid no heed. To this sober, industrious workman, who knew only one code of honor—to pay one's debts and be decent—this youth, with his crimes, his debauchery, his good-for-nothingness,

was only a burden on society, a menace, a loathsome rat, vermin that should be crushed on sight, a thing unclean, a contemptible specimen, to be driven from the abode of honest men. He planted himself squarely before the youth, who, on his guard, held the lifter conveniently in his hand. They glared at each other a moment, and then the stevedore spoke. Menacingly he said:

"Awhile ago ye met me wife in yer dance hall and gave her a line o' talk about goin' to work as a waitress. I heard about it—and ye was damned careful to keep out o' me sight. Now I told yer mother ye wasn't to come into this place or speak to Maggie——"

The youth was palpably nervous, but he made an attempt to bluff it out. With a sulky smile he answered:

"Aw! I was only joshin'——"

The stevedore cut him short. Shaking his fist in his face he cried:

"Well, ye don't pull that josh in my house, see? And what's more, ye keep out o' it."

"I jest come in fer some kindlin'," protested the youth with an air of injured innocence.

Heinie shrugged his shoulders. Contemptuously he retorted:

"Go out in the street and chop yer own—women

don't work for yer kind in this place. Jest git that—your game won't go."

The youth looked up defiantly.

"What game?" he demanded.

Again Heinie raised his fist. Angriely he thundered:

"Bringin' young girls down to yer damned dance hall, makin' 'em drink. Sellin' their bodies and livin' off 'em—playing a trade so dirty low even the dogs in the street won't mix with ye!"

Steve raised the iron lifter.

"Why, damn ye!" he cried threateningly, as he advanced a step.

"Steve!" cried his mother, who, powerless to intervene, watched the scene in an agony of fear.

Heinie, fearless, stood his ground.

"Put that down!" he commanded.

The youth smiled. Defiantly he retorted:

"Maybe I like to hold it."

"Put it down!" thundered the stevedore, ready to spring forward, his hands working dangerously.

Another instant and the big fellow would have seized the crook by the throat and shaken the life out of him as a terrier does a rat. The youth seemed to realize his danger and recognize the futility of further argument, for dropping the lifter, he said meaningly:

"All right! I don't need it!"

Mrs. Bates, reassured now that the tension was over, picked up the lifter and replaced it on the stove.

"Boys, boys," she pleaded. "Don't quarrel."

"You shut up!" exclaimed her son insolently. Turning to the stevedore he added: "Now what ye got to say?"

"Just this," said Heinie significantly; "if ye know what's good for ye, don't ye ever show yer mug in this place again, and if you ever try your con talk on Maggie like yer passed her awhile ago——"

"Well?" demanded the youth impudently.

The stevedore seemed to be making a great inward effort to control himself. For a second he paused and was silent. Then in a cold, steely voice he said: "Yer a pretty handsome feller, and I guess ye need your looks in yer business, don't ye?"

"It's me stock in trade," grinned the youth.

"Well, if I ever see ye in here again, or in speaking-distance of Maggie, I won't stop to ask ye what ye're talkin' about——"

"What'll you do?"

"I'll spoil yer stock in trade! Ye got that? Now get out!"

Slowly, with a contemptuous shrug of his

shoulders, the young man turned on his heel. As he moved towards the door he said sneeringly:

"As this is your shanty, ye got a perfect right to order me out. Ye show yer good sense to let it go at that!"

"And don't ye ever come back!" exclaimed the stevedore warningly.

Steve had already reached the door. Feeling that he was in comparative safety, he answered insolently:

"We'll see about that when the time comes."

He disappeared, and Mrs. Bates, with a sigh of relief, turned to the stevedore. Apologetically she exclaimed:

"Steve won't come in again, I'll see to that!"

The big fellow nodded. More amiably he said:

"Do it! Ye're a good friend of our'n, Bates. Don't let him come in and spoil it! Any dog what's in the business he is——"

The Irishwoman quickly held up a protesting hand.

"Wait, Heinie. He's my boy!"

"All right," he said carelessly; "we'll drop it!"

"What ye comin' home at this time for?" she inquired suddenly.

"The walkin' delegate's jawin' with the boss," he answered.

She looked at him in dismay.

"The stevedores goin' to be called out?" she exclaimed in dismay.

"Looks that way," he replied doggedly.

"Aw, what a shame!"

He nodded as he muttered:

"Yep, it's rotten news for Maggie."

Glancing apprehensively toward the other room, the washerwoman went on confidentially:

"Say, Heinie, I hear McKenzie wants a man to tend his stable. It'll come in handy if ye're laid off. I told Steve about it, but he wouldn't go. Why don't ye chase down before anyone else does?"

The stevedore's gloomy face brightened. Snatching up his cap he made for the door, exclaiming:

"I will. Thanks for the tip!"

"That's all right," she said cheerily. "Hope ye get it. Ye'd better hurry!"

Just before going out he stopped and turned round. Hesitatingly he said:

"No use tellin' Maggie I'm out of work till I know for sure."

Mrs. Bates nodded. Reassuringly she said:

"She'll know nothin'. No, o' course not. Go along with ye!"

The next moment she heard him hurrying downstairs.

CHAPTER VI

L EFT alone. Mrs. Bates carefully locked the door so that no one could take them by surprise, then crossing the room cautiously on tiptoe she peeped into the bedroom to see what Maggie was doing. She evidently saw enough to convince her that she would not be disturbed, for returning quickly she stooped down by the dresser and dragged the cradle from under its hiding-place. Her woman's curiosity was unable to contain itself any longer. She had already seen enough to tell her how matters stood, but she wished to make sure, to know everything. Lifting up the cover, she took out baby clothes, ribbons and sundry nursery articles, all of prime necessity in view of the stork's approaching visit. They were of all shapes, colors and sizes, and the Irishwoman, her maternal interest keenly aroused, was busy admiring each of them, her back to the bedroom door, when suddenly the stevedore's wife appeared, pale and haggard-looking. For a moment she stood on the threshold as

if transfixed, unable to believe the evidence of her own eyes. Who had dared violate the sanctity of her cherished secret? Furiously she rushed forward to protect her treasures, resenting their being touched. Angrily she exclaimed:

"Here—what ye interferin' with those things now fer? Ye let 'em alone!"

Mrs. Bates rose to her feet, and holding out her arms in motherly fashion said tenderly:

"Maggie darlin'! Is it true? Aw, Maggie, Maggie!"

Already over wrought, choking with pent-up emotion, it needed but a word of sympathy to make the young woman give way entirely. Breaking down, she wept bitterly, her body shaken with convulsive sobbing. Full of neighborly kindness, Mrs. Bates put her arm round her waist. Soothingly she said:

"There, there, Maggie, don't cry—cry——" Suddenly remembering what she had said only a few minutes before about children being born in the tenements, she stopped and added quickly: "To think what I was sayin' to ye awhile ago!"

The young woman shook her head. Bitterly she replied:

"It's all true—every word—everything you said is true. I didn't want to believe it, but it's true, it's true."

The Irishwoman tried to calm her.

"No, no, Maggie—now——"

But the young woman refused to be comforted. Sobbing as if her heart was breaking, she went on despairingly:

"I'm a wicked fool—that's what I am. I ain't fit to live."

Mrs. Bates raised her hand reprovingly.

"Stop talking so," she exclaimed gruffly.

Maggie shook her head. Despondently she sobbed:

"I ain't, all the same."

The Irishwoman raised her hand threateningly. Angrily she exclaimed:

"Stop it, or I'll shmack ye one! Ye's is actin' entirely within yer rights——!"

She relapsed into a sullen silence, while Maggie, who had dropped listlessly on to a chair, continued to weep quietly. Suddenly Mrs. Bates looked up and asked:

"What does Heinie say?"

The young wife shook her head.

"He don't know."

The washerwoman opened wide her eyes. Grimly she said:

"It's toime ye told him."

"No, I can't," replied Maggie hastily.

The young woman looked around in a terrified fashion. Fearfully she continued:

"I don't dare. Heinie thinks like you do. A kid ain't got a chance down here, and he's been readin' books and magazines in Cooper Union——"

Mrs. Bates gave a snort of impatience.

"What's he readin' books and magazines fer and him a stevedore?" she exclaimed scornfully. "He ought ter have more sense than to try to know more than he ought ter."

Maggie twisted her hands nervously. Fervently she said:

"Oh, I wish to God he'd never gone there! Up till a while ago he used to feel like I did."

The Irishwoman smiled.

"He'd have welcomed it, eh?"

Maggie nodded. Quickly she went on:

"We used to talk about it nights. How happy our home 'ud be with kids, somethin' to hold him an' me together forever, somethin' to work for. It 'ud be a real home then, no matter where it was or how poor it was. Why, he used to bring little trinkets home to put away against the time when we might need them—look!"

Going to the table and pulling out a drawer she held up a child's Mother Goose book, and went on:

"One day we was awful hard up, too. He saw

this in a store window and he bought it. It was cheap and he said he jest couldn't help it."

Wiping her eyes, she replaced the book in the drawer and continued:

"Then one day the health officer said somethin', an' that started him thinkin'. He started readin' things up to find out for himself. An' now he's fierce against it. He says bringin' kids into the world in places like this is worse than murder. Think of it, Bates—worse than murder!"

Mrs. Bates made an exclamation of impatience.

"Aah!"

"I wouldn't believe it at first," went on the young woman. "I fought against believin' it. But now even you say it's so. The Doc says it's so, an' I can see it in the sick kid downstairs——" Stopping short and covering her face with her hands she sobbed: "Oh, it's awful!"

The Irishwoman folded her arms and looked at her young neighbor for a few moments in silence. Then, shaking her head, she exclaimed severely:

"Sure, it's a foine state of moind ye're gettin' in!"

"Heinie'll be wild at me!" wailed the young woman.

"Pshaw!" exclaimed the elder woman, with a shrug of her shoulders. "He'll take it all right. But ye've got to tell him."

Maggie, terror-stricken at the very suggestion, cowered:

"Yes, I know I got to."

The Irishwoman burst into a loud laugh.

"Shure, he'll be kissin' ye till ye're smilin' and tickled to death! Tell him right out. If he's got any objections, he can be takin' ye away, he can."

"Take me away?" exclaimed the young woman in surprise.

Mrs. Bates nodded. Smiling she said:

"Do you think this is the only place of residence in the world?"

"What do you mean?" demanded Maggie, staring at her in amazement.

The Irishwoman seemed amused at her surprise. Continuing she said:

"What's the matter with Wyoming? Shure, it's the paradise o' babies. Look at Steve. When Steve was a baby he used to sleep in the sage brush like a regular little Moses."

Maggie twisted her fingers nervously. What her neighbor had just said had started her heart beating violently. Could it be possible that there was some way of escape from this terrible city, and that she and Heinie could go to some new country, far away from all this filth and rottenness—to a land of flowers and sunshine, where her baby could be born

and grow up strong and healthy? Was any such happiness possible to any such poor poverty-stricken beings as they? Vaguely, timidly she said:

"Wyoming—it's a terrible long ways off, ain't it? Say, I bet it's a beautiful place."

The Irishwoman laughed. Carelessly, she said:

"It ain't keepin' tourists away from the Garden of Eden, but to my mind it's got it on this place."

The young woman, full now of this new idea, stared at her neighbor as if spell-bound. Rapturously she exclaimed:

"It's all covered over with grass out there, ain't it? An' there's trees, an' brooks, an' lakes. An' ye can jest take ye lunch an' go off on a picnic whenever ye wants, and lay aroun' an' pick roses."

Mrs. Bates shrugged her shoulders as she replied with a chuckle:

"All the pickin' ye'll do at picnics'll be the shells off'n hard-boiled eggs. There ain't no roses in Wyoming."

Maggie's mouth fell. With a shade of disappointment she exclaimed:

"There ain't?"

The Irishwoman shook her head. Seriously she went on:

"No, dearie, it's a hard, rugged country, an' there ain't much grass and there ain't much trees, an'

there's less water than there's whisky, an' ye got to scrap for a livin' jest like ye do here; but ye got the color in yer cheek and the sparkle in yer eye to scrap with. An' that's where me boy Steve was born."

Involuntarily Maggie clasped her hands together nervously. Excitedly she exclaimed:

"And he grew strong and husky——"

"The night he come into the world," went on the Irishwoman, "the thunder was crashin' up among the peaks and the wind was howlin' and shriekin' and rippin' board after board off the house, and the cattle outside was a-bellowin' and stampedin', but above it all, loud and strong, came the howl o' me baby, an' I thanked the good Lord for it. For I knew he'd come into the world to last——"

Maggie listened like one hypnotized.

"Yes, yes!" she interrupted, unable to contain herself any longer.

"—like the rocks an' the prairies an' the mountains!" concluded her neighbor solemnly.

An exclamation that sounded both like a sob and a cry of joy escaped from Maggie's lips. Ecstatically she repeated:

"Come into the world to last—that's what I want! Oh, God, that's what I want!"

Mrs. Bates nodded. Sagely she said:

"And it's what's expected of ye. If ye bring a life into the world, ye got to start it right. It's yer everlastin' duty."

"My everlastin' duty!" echoed Maggie rapturously. Turning quickly to her neighbor she said eagerly:

"Say, d'ye think Heinie'll quit his job and go? But they can't have no use for stevedores!"

"Shure!" said Mrs. Bates, "there's railroad gangs and fence mendin'."

Maggie shook her head. Dubiously she said:

"An' it takes money."

The Irishwoman was silent for a moment. Then confidentially she said:

"I can put yez next to a scheme to land yez both in Wyomin' and set ye up for a hundred dollars at the most."

Maggie opened her eyes. Incredulously she exclaimed:

"Ye can! But by the time we've raised the hundred—it 'ud be too late."

The Irishwoman shook her head as she replied:

"If a spry young feller like Heinie can't get it in time, he ain't fit to be yer husband——"

Impatiently Maggie interrupted her. Eagerly she said:

"Say, tell us the scheme, will ye?"

With the self-satisfied air of one possessing superior knowledge, Mrs. Bates went on:

"Ever hear tell o' homesteadin'? Well, there's certain land the Government ain't got no use for, so it gives little pieces to the poor people, and tells them to go and live happy ever after."

The young woman listened breathlessly. When her neighbor stopped speaking, she exclaimed:

"They give it to ye, to *own*?"

"Wait till ye see the land," chuckled the Irish-woman.

"Then if we get a hundred," went on Maggie eagerly, "we can set up in Wyomin'?"

"That's the game."

The young woman clapped her hands with joy. Excitedly she exclaimed:

"Heinie's got to do it. I'll help him—I'll work, too. Gee, think of it—livin' out there in the sunshine an' flowers! Anyway, it is away from here. Heinie's got to do it. Tell him about it when he comes home to-night, will ye?"

"An' you'll be tellin' him about the other?"

The young woman winced. It was a dreaded ordeal which she would prefer to postpone until the very last moment possible. Weakly she murmured:

"Oh, if I could only wait and get away from here first! Then he wouldn't mind——"

"Ye can't wait!" said Mrs. Bates decisively. "Besides, it'll spur him on to goin'——"

Maggie gave a sigh of resignation. What was the use of fighting any longer against what must be? Impatiently she exclaimed:

"Oh, I wish I wasn't such a coward!" Then quickly, as if her mind were quite made up, she added: "I'll tell him to-night!"

As she spoke there was the sound of steps and voices in the hallway outside. Jumping up in fright, Maggie hastily pushed the cradle back in its place. Startled, she exclaimed:

"Somebody's comin'. Maybe it's Heinie! God, if he ever saw this!"

"Sh!" whispered Mrs. Bates, as she hastily dried her hands. "He wouldn't be comin' home in the middle of the day."

There was a loud knock at the door. Quickly Maggie went to open it, and to her surprise Steve appeared on the threshold. Standing in the hallway behind him were an elderly lady, whom she recognized as Mrs. Burke-Smith, and a gentleman in clerical garb, whom she had never seen before. Coming into the room, Steve gave them both a significant wink. Mrs. Bates, with a shrug of her shoulders, returned to her washtub. Impatiently she muttered:

"It's them charity people, ye know."

Steve lounged in, with his hat on his head, his hands in his pockets. With an insolent chuckle he said:

"I sold these guys tickets to come in and see the morgue. Do ye mind?"

The clerical-looking gentleman advanced into the room, followed by the lady. He was a nervous little man of forty, dressed in the fashionable garb of an Episcopal minister. His manner was patronizing to everybody except Mrs. Burke-Smith, on whom he danced obsequious attendance. By a chain he was leading Mrs. Burke-Smith's pet Japanese terrier Bébé, a pampered, overfed little beast which, with his hairless body and thin-pointed ears, looked like an overgrown rat. The dog, which seemed to turn up its aristocratic nose directly it sniffed at these common surroundings, had on a harness and blanket embroidered with its initial B, all ridiculously elaborate and elegant.

"May we come in?" simpered the minister in affected fashion.

Mrs. Bates looked up and scowled. Rough and plain-spoken, she had little patience with the rich society folk who, she insisted, tried to still their guilty consciences by making pretence of showing sympathy with the poor.

"Ask Maggie," she answered gruffly. "It's her place."

The stevedore's wife, timid and embarrassed, hung back in the rear. At first she thought that her friend Miss Alice was among the visitors, but she was not there. The man was an entire stranger, and although she recognized the lady as Mrs. Burke-Smith, whose automobile had run over little Mary Kelly, she had never met her, and therefore felt a certain restraint. The society woman, with the haughty assurance that most people of wealth assume, pushed forward and took the initiative. With a smirk meant to be gracious, she said:

"Good morning, my good people——"

Maggie curtsied.

"Good mornin', ma'am."

"Mornin'," growled Mrs. Bates, hardly looking up from her washing.

Steve burst into a loud laugh. Addressing the visitors in the brazen manner of a Coney Island barker he announced:

"Folks, this is the juiciest show on the board-walk. When ye've seen enough, step out by the door on the right, tell yer friends about it and come again——"

The visitors looked at each other, horrified. Mrs. Bates, pretending to be busy at the tub, giggled.

Mr. Howland took a coin from his pocket and held it out to the youth.

"Here, young man."

"Thank ye, brother," grinned Steve as he took the money.

As he went out he winked at Mrs. Burke-Smith, who started back in alarm.

"I believe the fellow is drunk!" she exclaimed indignantly.

Mrs. Bates chuckled.

"Oh, go on," she grinned; "he's only humorous."

Mrs. Burke-Smith turned haughtily away, and looking at her adviser, stood as if expecting him to proceed with the business on hand.

"Well?" she said in a shrill, impatient tone, with rising inflection.

Mr. Howland took a memorandum from his pocket. Reading it carefully with the aid of his spectacles he said:

"Let me see—Number 18. Heinrich Schultz; wife Maggie—deserving and thrifty."

Mrs. Burke-Smith smiled condescendingly.

"Oh, yes. I remember Mrs. Schultz. Alice has mentioned them particularly. Which one of you is Maggie?"

Maggie gave another curtsy.

"Me, ma'am."

"I'm glad to see you, Maggie," said the caller patronizingly. "I am one of the committee making a tour of inspection. No doubt you have heard of us—the Society for the Moral Uplift of the Plain People—an admirable organization. Mr. Howland is taking me through the building. My niece has interested me in the work down here. She speaks most highly of you and your husband."

"Thanks, ma'am."

At that moment there was a knock at the door and Alice appeared. She seemed quite prepared to see all who were there. Quickly she exclaimed:

"Oh, here you are, aunt! Good morning, Maggie." Turning again to her aunt she added: "I didn't mean to miss you downstairs."

Mrs. Burke-Smith smiled graciously.

"We're getting on quite well, dear." Noticing Mrs. Bates playing with the dog, she whispered hurriedly to her niece: "You'd better keep Bébé near you. I really don't like exposing the poor animal to these dreadful surroundings."

Mr. Howland, still busy with his note-book, smiled affably.

"Remarkable chap showed us up here," he said.

Turning to Maggie, Mrs. Burke-Smith went on blandly:

"It is our desire to assist those among you who show a disposition to better yourselves."

Not knowing how to take this speech, not quite sure if she ought to resent it, Maggie stood still at first and said nothing. Finally she mumbled:

"Yes, ma'am."

Alice meantime was making frantic dumb signs, trying to attract her aunt's attention. Well aware of the extreme sensitiveness of the class to which the stevedore's wife belonged, she wished to avoid anything being said that was likely to hurt her feelings. But Mrs. Burke-Smith paid no heed. Full of her own importance she went on patronizingly:

"Of course we realize that to a few of you assistance in the form of donations is humiliating——"

Alice nudged her relative's arm.

"Auntie, dear——"

But the elderly lady paid no heed. Determined to pursue her investigation in her own way, she went on:

"Your husband is working now?"

Maggie nodded.

"Yes'm. He's a stevedore, down on the docks."

The inquisitor nodded approvingly.

"Splendid. Does he drink?"

"Not to hurt," replied the young woman, laugh-

ing in spite of herself. "Jest a little sometimes when he's tired."

Mr. Howland smiled benignly over his gold-rimmed spectacles. With his two fat hands clasped over his fat paunch he said loftily:

"Really, you know, that's very intelligent. It's a positive pleasure to find these occasional examples of the poor emerging from the thralldom of narrow thinking. This good man realizes, no doubt, the value of temperance over total abstinence." Turning to Maggie he said: "I judge your husband must read a bit."

"Up to Cooper Union every night," she answered promptly.

The divine rubbed his hands with satisfaction.

"Oh!" he exclaimed as if extremely pleased.

Mrs. Burke-Smith turned to him.

"Make a note of reading matter, Dickie." Addressing the stevedore's wife again, she went on pompously: "My dear, your husband's laudable desire for knowledge should be encouraged, but along beneficial lines. Much of our current magazine reading is most sinister and unwholesome in effect."

Slow to follow, the young woman looked at her visitor helplessly.

"What, ma'am?" she gasped.

Alice came to the rescue. Pleasantly she said :

"Auntie means that some of the stories he reads make him sad."

Maggie nodded. Naïvely she answered :

"He does get grouchy sometimes."

Mrs. Burke-Smith glared significantly at her escort.

"You see, Dickie," she said, "we must take it in time." Noticing Maggie stoop to pet the dog she added : "Are you fond of animals, my dear?"

"Oh, awful!" replied the young woman.

The visitor beamed.

"That is very nice. Have you any children?"

"No, ma'am."

"That is very sensible. Down here you really shouldn't."


"Oh, auntie!" exclaimed Alice deprecatingly.

She tried to attract her relative's attention, while Mrs. Bates, who was getting more and more angry, slammed some clothes into the tub. Maggie nodded docilely. In a trembling voice she said :

"That's what Heinie says."

Mr. Howland pursed his lips.

"Quite right, my dear," he said, with an air of superior wisdom. "Having children in this unhealthy quarter is an economic error. Whatever you do, don't have children." Turning to his com-



panion, he said in an undertone, "Admirable! If such intelligence were the rule, what a superior lower class we should soon have!"

Thus reminded of her keen secret sorrow, Maggie began to weep. Mrs. Bates, hardly able to contain her indignation, dropped her work at the washtub and going over attempted to console her. Sympathetically she said:

"There, there, dearie!"

Quickly Alice turned to her companions, and by a quick gesture pointed to the young woman's distress. Protestingly she whispered:

"Auntie, can't you see that we are taking the wrong course?"

Full of self-confidence, Mrs. Burke-Smith shook her head.

"Nonsense," she exclaimed, "we must get to the core of things."

Mr. Howland fidgeted nervously about. In an undertone he said:

"Evidently we have touched upon a sensitive point."

Mrs. Burke-Smith tried to make amends. Clumsily she said:

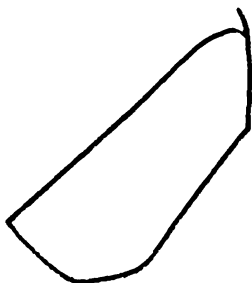
"I'm sorry, my dear. But we all have our burdens to bear. Come now, you mustn't cry."

Mrs. Bates laughed outright. The visitor's air

of superiority was more than her Irish sense of humor could stand. Abruptly she exclaimed:

"Shut up, she ain't cryin'. She's laughin' to hear ye talkin' through yer expensive bonnit." As she spoke she caught a glimpse through the door of the stevedore's tall figure in the hall outside. Turning quickly to Maggie she whispered: "Dry up! Here's Heinie."

The next instant the door was flung open and the stevedore appeared.



CHAPTER VII

DUSTY and tired-looking, as if he had tramped a long distance on a fruitless errand, Schultz came in and carelessly threw his cap down on a chair. He was plainly surprised at the presence of strangers and looked at them inquiringly, half angrily, half curiously. Then recognizing Alice, whom he knew and liked, he gave her a respectful, friendly nod.

"Good morning, miss."

Mr. Howland and Mrs. Burke-Smith turned quickly to inspect the newcomer. While the society woman surveyed him languidly from head to foot through her gold lorgnette, her legal adviser said pompously:

"You are Schultz I presume."

The stevedore, whose humor for several reasons was not of the best that morning, gave the questioner a look which made the little man quail:

"Well—what of it?" he demanded angrily.

Fearing trouble, and unable herself to account for her husband's early return, Maggie rushed up to him.

"Heinie," she exclaimed, "what are ye home this early for? What's wrong?"

The stevedore looked at her closely.

"What's ye been cryin' fer?" he demanded, without answering her question.

His wife looked away. Doggedly she answered:

"I ain't bin cryin' "

"Yes, ye have," he insisted; "what about?"

Mr. Howland, grave and tactful, thought it time to intervene. Blandly he said:

"I fear we were discussing a somewhat painful topic——"

Fiercely the stevedore turned on him.

"Well, ye needn't," he retorted sharply; "she's happy jest as she is."

"Sure, I'm all right," said Maggie hurriedly. Looking up at her husband she asked again: "What ye home from work now fer?"

He looked glum as he replied with a careless shrug of his shoulders:

"Strike!"

His wife stared at him in dismay.

"Strike!" she echoed. "Are ye goin' to lay off work?"

He nodded as he answered lightly :

"For a while."

The young woman turned away with a suppressed sob. Who better than she knew what "laying off" meant? She had been through strikes before. She had experienced all the bitterness and suffering they entail. They had no money saved up. What would they do merely to live? And what was still worse—what chance was there now of ever getting together that \$100 to enable them to escape this living hell and go to Wyoming? Keeping back her tears only by an effort, she glanced piteously at her neighbor, Mrs. Bates. The Irishwoman shook her head mournfully.

The visitors had watched the scene in silence and with much interest. They had heard what the stevedore said about labor troubles, and they saw the effect which the announcement had on the young wife. Instead, however, of displaying sympathy, Mr. Howland thought the moment opportune to do a little preaching.

"A strike!" he exclaimed. "Most deplorable!" Aside to his employer he whispered: "This means a stand-off for the rent!"

"Doesn't the luck beat hell!" exclaimed Mrs. Bates.

"Most deplorable!" said Mr. Howland, ignoring

the washerwoman's sudden outburst of profanity. Turning to Schultz he said:

"My good man, is there no argument I might put forward that would induce you to return to work?" Lifting up a finger as a warning, he added: "Consider——"

The stevedore laughed awkwardly, as he replied:

"Say—I'm crazy about laying off!"

"But as I understand these labor disputes," went on the cleric unruffled, "you working men are merely the tools of demagogues—you refuse to work at their command, and those dependent upon you—your poor wife, for instance, is the helpless victim——"

"Oh, that's all right!" interrupted Maggie, irritated at his interference. "Heinie can keep us goin'. Strikes ain't nothin' for us to tide over. We've done it before, only——"

Stopping short, she turned away to hide her tears. Her husband, puzzled by her agitation and extraordinary behavior, looked at her in bewilderment. Finally he asked:

"What's ailin' ye, Maggie?"

"Nothin'," she stammered, "only—we was savin' up so fast. We had twenty-seven dollars in the bank—pretty soon we'd have had a hundred dollars." With a faint attempt at a smile, she went

on: "I was kind o' stuck on savin' a hundred, but now—well—it can't be helped, can it?"

Like most men of his type, Schultz was not demonstrative in his affections, yet, in his quiet way, he was devoted to his brave little wife. Tenderly he put his arm about her.

"Don't you fret, Maggie," he said kindly.

"I ain't got no kick comin'—ye know that," she answered, smiling up at him.

Mr. Howland had watched the little conjugal scene with some impatience. Would these people, he mused, never understand the seriousness of their situation? Stepping forward, he said solemnly:

"But what I would impress is—the futility of your attitude, the folly of these periodical outbursts of discontent——"

Schultz turned and stared at the clerical meddler with an expression of mingled anger and amusement. Roughly he exclaimed:

"Say, what d'ye think——" Checking himself, he turned away with an exclamation of contempt: "Gee!"

Mrs. Bates, who had been watching them with considerable amusement, goaded the stevedore on.

"G'wan!" she whispered, "let him tell ye, Dutch. He's the original sure-cure kid!"

Mrs. Burke-Smith overheard the remark and

glared wrathfully at the offender. Such impertinence in her presence was not to be tolerated. Looking the Irishwoman over contemptuously from head to foot, she turned to Maggie and demanded haughtily:

"Does this—woman belong here?"

Mrs. Bates, who was now scrubbing in her best society manner, gave Schultz a nudge. With a roguish twinkle in her eye she exclaimed:

"Introduce us, Dutch. We've bin spaikin', but we ain't met——"

Suddenly recalling his duty as master of the ceremonies, Mr. Howland hurriedly intervened.

"Er—this is Mrs. Burke-Smith."

The washerwoman's face brightened. Dropping her scrubbing brushes, she advanced toward the millionaire society leader, saying:

"Oh, ye'r a Burke, are ye——" Beaming very amiably, she went on: "Shure now and I like ye better fer that. I was a Burke, too, before I married Batesy. Tell us, do ye iver hear from the Ould Counthry?"

Taken back by the woman's impudence, Mrs. Burke-Smith and Mr. Howland stood speechless with indignation. Schultz, almost doubled up with laughter, had to make a hurried exit into the bedroom, holding his hand over his mouth to stifle his

laughter, but Maggie, vexed at this gratuitous insult done her visitors, gave the Irishwoman an angry look. Sharply she said:

"Mrs. Bates, ye'd better hurry with that washin' I got to have that tub myself pretty soon."

Highly offended at this snub, Mrs. Bates sniffed the air haughtily. Returning to her tub, she exclaimed:

"Oh, very well!"

Much embarrassed by her neighbor's and husband's behavior, Maggie tried to mend matters. Addressing Mrs. Burke-Smith, she said, in a low, apologetic tone:

"Ye mustn't mind 'em, ma'am. Heinie feels bad about the strike. That's why he had to leave."

The words were no sooner out of her mouth than there came a peal of unrestrained laughter from the inner room. It was Schultz, who could not control his merriment. Hastily closing the door while Mrs. Burke-Smith and Mr. Howland exchanged angry glances, Maggie looked toward her neighbor, who was still busy at the washtub, and added:

"Mrs. Bates ain't just herself, neither."

The Irishwoman bristled up indignantly, but Mrs. Burke-Smith, mollified, turned to the stevedore's wife. More amiably she said:

"It is quite apparent that you are blessed with finer perceptions than those others——"

Clasping his two hands together, Mr. Howland rolled up his eyes:

"What a maze her poor little life must be!" he exclaimed.

Mrs. Burke-Smith nodded. Pursing her lips determinedly, she said, in an undertone:

"I feel it my duty to do something, Dickie."

He bowed.

"I heartily commend it, my dear madam."

The society woman turned and motioned to Maggie to move away out of hearing. Patronizingly she said:

"Stand over there, my dear."

The young woman moved away and the visitor whispered to her clerical adviser:

"You know I need a sewing woman."

"Ah! just the thing!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands.

Mrs. Burke-Smith went on:

"The girl seems fond of animals. Bébé needs a nurse."

"Oh, how splendid!" exclaimed the minister ecstatically.

Mrs. Burke-Smith paused and pondered a moment. Hesitatingly she turned to her niece:

"Do you think it's safe to have Maggie come to the house?"

The young girl beamed with pleasure. It was a capital idea and would be of great help to the Schultzes, especially under the present circumstances. Enthusiastically she replied:

"Oh, perfectly!"

But her aunt still hesitated. Dubiously she said:

"I've always known all about my help."

"Oh—such an innocent, ingenuous little thing," pleaded the young girl. "Maggie wouldn't hurt a fly."

Mr. Howland shrugged his shoulders. Suspicious of everybody, he trusted nobody.

"Huh!" he grunted. "You had better be sure."

"Oh, please, aunt," pleaded Alice.

Mrs. Burke-Smith held up a warning finger.

"Well, remember—if anything goes wrong—you're responsible."

"I'm quite willing," laughed the young girl.

While her aunt and her adviser discussed the details together, Alice moved near Mrs. Bates and stood watching her work. Looking up at the young visitor, the Irishwoman asked bluntly, with a twinkle in her eye:

"Are ye acquainted with many docthors?"

Alice laughed. With some embarrassment she answered:

"Not many. Why do you ask?"

The washerwoman chuckled. Significantly she said:

"Oh, I'm thinkin' they're a foine body o' men."

The young girl blushed. It was quite plain, of course, what such a pointed remark meant, and it annoyed her to think that these people had been watching and perhaps drawing their own conclusions from her friendship for Dr. Taylor. Not that she had any reason to be ashamed of it. The physician was not wealthy, but he was rising rapidly in his profession, and had the brightest possible prospects. Her aunt did not like him, but she could not help that. She had her own life to live. She did not see why she should give up a man she really loved to marry a richer man whom she could not even respect. Matters were coming to a crisis. The physician was continually urging an elopement, arguing that once they were married her aunt would be reconciled, and she herself was beginning to think this was the only solution. She wondered where he was to-day. She half expected to find him in the building, as he had the sick baby on the ground floor to look after. Not to have met him

was a disappointment which she tried to dissimulate as best she could.

Mrs. Burke-Smith, meantime, serenely unconscious of these mutinous plans evolving in her niece's head, was still considering whether or not Maggie would suit her as a sewing woman. Turning to the young woman, she looked her over critically.

"I think I'll take her," she said finally. "Do you do plain sewing, my dear?"

"Yes'm."

"Come a little closer—don't be afraid——"

Suppressing a smile with a great effort, the young woman approached.

"Where have you worked before?"

"In Oppenheim's shirt factory, before I married Heinie."

"Some dreadful sweat-shop, no doubt, you poor child!" exclaimed the society woman, throwing up her hands. Graciously she added: "I'm going to let you come to my house to sew."

Instead of appearing pleased, Maggie looked confused. Hesitatingly she said:

"Why——"

Mrs. Burke-Smith looked at her in surprise.

"You wish to work, don't you?" she exclaimed.

The young woman nodded.

"Heinie never used to want to let me to," she stammered, "but now he's on the strike I guess, maybe, I'd better—I'll ask him."

Mr. Howland, who had been nervously fidgeting about, pulled out his watch. Looking at it, he said impatiently:

"The time is passing."

Mrs. Burke-Smith turned to go. Addressing Maggie, she said:

"We have other visits to make in the building. We'll come back shortly for your answer. Please have your mind made up."

Calling to her niece, who was still standing talking to the Irishwoman, she said curtly:

"Come, Alice."

The ladies moved toward the door, followed by Mr. Howland and the dog, when suddenly the door opened and Dr. Taylor burst into the room. He stopped short on seeing the visitors, and he gave Alice a quick anxious glance as if afraid that this unexpected intrusion of their trysting-place meant that their secret was discovered. But the young girl reassured him with a look, and he advanced cordially to greet her aunt.

"Why, I declare!"

Alice, embarrassed and confused, said nothing, but played nervously with her parasol. Mrs. Burke-

Smith surveyed the young man with haughty coldness, while Mrs. Bates, at her washtub, threw up her hands in mock surprise.

"Gee whiz!" she chuckled.

The young physician bowed to everybody.

"Why, how do you do?" he said amiably.

"How do you do?" replied Alice timidly.

"It is quite a surprise to find you here," went on the young man.

"Quite, I can imagine," said Mrs. Burke-Smith sarcastically.

Pointing downstairs, the physician said:

"I've got a sick child downstairs," he said.

"Really!" exclaimed Mrs. Burke-Smith frigidly.

The frigid reception seemed to disconcert the young man, for, stammering, he added awkwardly:

"So I—dropped in here for—some hot water."

"I hope you get your—hot water!" snapped the society dame caustically.

The doctor turned to Mrs. Bates. "I like it boiling, please. It wasn't half hot enough last time."

The Irishwoman gave him a good-natured wink.

"Leave it to me, dochtor," she said.

Going to the stove, she put some water into a small tin pail, while the physician addressed Mrs. Burke-Smith. Trying to appear affable, he said:

"Your niece is becoming quite familiar with the work down here."

"So it seems," she retorted severely.

Unabashed, the young man went on:

"It's quite a science, you know. It's great to think she's been able to interest you. I know she felt discouraged at first——"

"Really!" interrupted the elderly lady sarcastically.

"Yes—she was afraid you looked on it all as a fad."

Mrs. Burke-Smith smiled grimly.

"I shouldn't call it that exactly," she said dryly.

"What induced you to consider it seriously enough to come down?"

"I thought she needed a chaperon," snapped the dowager.

In despair the doctor looked at Alice.

"You haven't been coming to the hospital to sing lately, have you?" he asked.

"I've promised to go to-morrow," she answered.

"The kiddies will be mighty glad to hear that," he smiled.

"Indeed you are not, my dear," interrupted her aunt severely; "your time is too much taken up as it is."

"But auntie—I've promised——"

"I will send someone else to take your place."

"Anyone else won't be appreciated half so much," laughed the doctor.

Mrs. Burke-Smith smiled grimly.

"I can readily believe that," she said.

The society woman was standing close to Mrs. Bates, near the stove, when suddenly the young physician exclaimed:

"Be careful there, Mrs. Bates, you are splashing the water on Mrs. Burke-Smith's gown!"

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed the dowager, drawing hastily back.

As the society woman turned to look at her dress the physician leaned over to Alice and whispered hurriedly:

"At Sherry's to-night."

"Yes, dear," she answered, in the same low tone.

The physician looked toward the aunt. "Is she coming?" he whispered.

Alice shook her head.

"No," she whispered. "A maid will bring me."

Mr. Howland had been watching the maneuvers of the young couple out of a corner of his eye, and he coughed with the object of attracting his employer's attention. Mrs. Burke-Smith looked up, but Alice and the doctor had already separated. Dr. Taylor approached Mrs. Bates.

"All ready, Mrs. Bates?" he asked.

The Irishwoman held the pail out to him. With a grin she said :

"Here you are, doctor—bilin'!"

The physician took the pail in his hand, and turning to the ladies made a deep bow :

"Good morning, ladies."

To his surprise, Mrs. Burke-Smith answered with surprising graciousness :

"Good morning, Dr. Taylor."

Quite unexpectedly she extended her hand, from which the glove was turned back. Taken by surprise the physician shifted the pail to his left hand, and was about to extend his right, when suddenly she ignored his hand and dipped her finger into the pail of water. Triumphant she cried :

"I thought as much—stone cold!"

The doctor looked reproachfully at the Irishwoman.

"Mrs. Bates, how could you?" he exclaimed, with mock indignation.

The washerwoman chuckled. Looking pointedly at Mrs. Burke-Smith, she retorted quickly :

"I'd hate to say what chilled it!"

The young man smiled in spite of himself and bowed himself out blandly.

"Well, good morning, everybody."

He disappeared, and Mrs. Burke-Smith turned angrily to her niece. Almost white with suppressed rage she said:

"You've seen the last of that young man, my dear!"

"Yes, auntie," said Alice demurely.

Still fuming, Mrs. Burke-Smith turned to Maggie. Curtly she said:

"I pay five dollars a week. You take your meals at the house. You can come up whenever you are ready." Addressing Mr. Howland and Alice, as she swept towards the door, she said:

"Come along!"

She sailed out, followed by her niece. Mr. Howland lagged behind for a final word with Maggie. Suavely he said:

"I hope, my child, that you will seize the opportunity to profit by this uplift."

Mrs. Bates snickered.

"Huh! It's a hold-up!" she said.

The cleric started to say something, but he was interrupted by Mrs. Burke-Smith calling from the hall:

"Come, Dickie!"

"Coming, dear Mrs. Burke-Smith, coming!"

He went out, closing the door behind him.

CHAPTER VIII

THE sound of the footsteps died away in the distance as the visitors went gingerly down the rickety stairs, and after listening for a moment to make sure they were alone, Mrs. Bates broke out into peals of unrestrained laughter. Awed by the presence of the swell folks, she had kept her merriment in so long that it was a relief to let it out. Now that they were gone, she could laugh to her heart's content. When she had calmed down somewhat, she put her arms akimbo and looked at her neighbor. With a grin she exclaimed:

"Can ye beat the loikes of that?"

"What ye buttin'.in fer?" exclaimed the young woman angrily. "Do ye want to lose me the job?"

"It's a fine illigant job she's offered ye—five dollars a week. The high-toned robber!"

"Just the same I got to have it. Ain't I?"

Mrs. Bates nodded.

"You bet ye have, and a lot more with it, if ye're goin' to Wyoming. Five a week—it takes twenty fives to make a hundred."

The young woman paced the room excitedly. With increasing nervous tension she exclaimed:

"I'm goin' to get a hundred somehow—I don't care how!"

"That's jest what I been thinkin'," said Mrs. Bates; "and I'm right."

"What do you mean?"

"It's your duty to start the little thing proper—because it can't start itself. It's the way of beasts—what's always good parents—if ye need something fer yer young—take it."

"Take it," exclaimed Maggie puzzled.

"Sure," mumbled the Irishwoman. "If ye can't pluck yer passage money from that crowd ye ain't fit to have a baby."

"Missus Bates!" cried Maggie scandalized. "What are ye sayin'?"

"Well, all the same I'm right," retorted the Irishwoman defiantly.

The stevedore's wife opened wide her eyes in surprise. Slowly she exclaimed:

"You tell me to steal? You—a good woman?"

"Bless ye, no," smiled her neighbor. "Shave it off—unnoticeable like."

Shocked for a moment at the suggestion of such a thing—even in jest—Maggie demanded in an awe-stricken tone:

“Don’t ye think I know nothin’ about the Ten Commandments?”

Mrs. Bates chuckled. Grimly she said:

“Lookin’ out fer yer own’s following the rules of nature—like animals do. I bet the Lord made the rules of nature long before he made the Ten Commandments.”

Maggie made no answer, but stood staring at her in silence. She had not thought of that before. Yet, why not? Her neighbor was right. The law of self-preservation came before anything else. No—no—she could not—she could not. She had always been a good, honest girl. What would Heinie think of her? He’d kill her. Yet the poison had done its work. It had set her thoughts running in a new channel. Greatly agitated, the young woman began nervously to pace the floor. Feverishly she said:

“Ye can talk and talk all ye like, but yer conscience tells ye yer wrong. You know it does. And ye can’t get back of that.”

The Irishwoman shrugged her shoulders as she answered:

“It’s plain the loikes of you ain’t got the price

of a conscience and a healthy baby too. Make up your mind which ye'll have——"

Maggie interrupted her fiercely. Indignantly she cried:

"Why, I'd think about it till I died. I wouldn't dare to look Heinie in the face——" Suddenly a thought struck her, and she added: "The sins of the fathers is visited on the children. Say, if I'm a thief——"

Thus reminded of her own, Mrs. Bates sighed. More soberly she answered:

"Maybe ye can beat the thievin' instincts out of the young 'un, but you can't beat the health into him, if he grows up around here."

Fearfully, apprehensively, Maggie looked around as if to make sure they were alone.

"Suppose I'm caught?" she whispered.

The Irishwoman gave her a significant look.

"I'll be prayin' fer yer night and day," she said.

"Oh, I'm scared!" said the young woman despairingly. "I wish I knew what to do."

As she spoke Schultz opened the bedroom door cautiously and poked his head in. Seeing that the visitors were gone, he looked relieved and, throwing the door wide open, came in to join them. Realizing that she was in the way, especially if Maggie had made up her mind to unburden herself

to her husband, the washerwoman began to collect her things together preparatory to departure. In a side whisper to Maggie she said:

"Tell Dutch now—I'll leave ye alone."

"Well," asked Heinie cheerfully, "have they beat it? I 'spose they were here offerin' charity?"

"To thimsilves," answered Mrs. Bates cynically as she gathered up her wash.

Maggie approached her husband. Looking up into his face she asked anxiously:

"Say, Heinie, is the strike apt to last long?"

He made no answer, but putting his arm affectionately about his wife, looked down at her inquiringly.

"Now tell me what's wrong with ye," he said.

Her agitation only increased under his steady scrutiny.

"Me—why, nothin'," she stammered.

"I know better," he insisted. "I can see—come on now, tell me."

Impatiently she broke away from him and retreated to the opposite side of the room.

"Why—why, what's the matter with *you*?" she retorted.

Puzzled, he turned for an explanation to their neighbor.

"What were they sayin' to her, Bates?"

The Irishwoman grinned.

"The lady is going to give Maggie an uplift. Ain't that nice?" she chuckled.

Schultz looked at his wife for an explanation, and she nodded. Slowly she said:

"She's offered me a job—sewin'. I can earn somethin' while ye're laying off."

"Fer how much," he demanded gruffly.

"Five a week," she replied timidly.

"Fine!" he exclaimed sarcastically. "What's the hours?"

"I don't know. I just go to the house and stay all day——"

"Till midnight? Nothin' doing!"

"But, Heinie," she protested, "we need it."

"Not that bad," he replied with a shrug of his shoulders. "She can try her charity slave-drivin' on someone else."

"But, Heinie——"

"If ye want to work a while, and maybe ye'd better just a little while I'm layin' off—I can get ye something easy round the factory for ten a week."

"Yes—I know—but——"

She looked significantly at Mrs. Bates. Quickly the Irishwoman said:

"Maybe she ruther be takin' the other, Dutch——"

"Yes, I—I——"

Schultz looked at her in amused surprise.

"What! For half the money," he exclaimed incredulously.

Mrs. Bates chuckled. With a significant glance at the wife she said:

"Ye be fergettin' the uplift! Ye'd better think it over, both o' ye. It has foine possibilities. Well—I must be goin'. So long!"

Nodding at the young couple, she took her belongings and, opening the door, went out, closing it behind her.

For a few moments after her departure the husband and wife said nothing. Schultz, his hands in his pockets, stared gloomily out of the window. Maggie, seated near the table, twisted her fingers nervously. Both were thinking hard—the husband of the prospects of getting a job of some sort to tide him over the strike, the wife of the temptation the Irishwoman had just put into her mind. It was an easy way of getting the money, with only a slight chance of detection. It would be wrong. She knew that. Poor though they were, she had always been honest. She had never done a dishonest action in her life. But wasn't it different now? There was another to be thought of. A child—her child—would soon come into the world—and

she had nothing to give it, nothing with which to clothe it. If it was born in that vile tenement it would not even have a fighting chance for its life. Certainly she owed it that—a chance to live! If they could only get away to Wyoming all would be well.

Out there Heinie could find all the work he wanted. In healthier surroundings they would all be well and happy. And all that stood between them and this land of promise was a paltry hundred dollars. Heinie seemed obstinately opposed to her taking the place. Perhaps it was just as well. She did not want to steal. If she did not go to the house she would not be tempted. After a long silence, during which her head throbbed with the thoughts and plans that surged through her tired brain, she murmured:

“I don’t want to work fer ’em, I guess.”

Schultz turned round. Scornfully he said:

“They’re a hot bunch—they are!”

She was ready to do what he wanted, but all the same she did not like him to be rough with her up-town friends. After all, they had been good to her—Miss Alice especially—and they no doubt meant well. Decisively she said:

“You shouldn’t get ’em mad. They can do us lots of good—and just now——”

Her husband shrugged his shoulders. Contemptuously he said:

"They can't do us no good. I can look after this ranch without the help of charity. Who asked 'em in here?"

She looked up at him in surprise.

"Why—they're just good people what likes comin' around doin' good."

He laughed disdainfully as he replied:

"Same as their children likes feedin' the monkeys in the park. It amuses 'em, that's why they do it. It amuses 'em."

Shaking her head, she replied indignantly:

"Heinie Schultz, it's wicked to talk about church people like that!"

He laughed bitterly.

"The poverty and trouble o' me and my family ain't made fer the pleasure o' no man. They can go and do their damned playin' somewhere else."

Sideways the young woman looked at her husband wistfully. If only she dare tell him; but he was in such an ugly mood that she had not the courage. Rising from her seat, she went up and, putting her arms affectionately round his neck, said appealingly:

"They could do so much fer us if ye'd only let 'em, and we need their help, Heinie, honest, we need

their help." She stopped short and was silent for a moment, then changing her tone and looking up into his face, she said coaxingly: "Say, how'd ye like to pull out and go away from here?"

He looked at her in amazement.

"Huh!" he exclaimed.

"Yes"—she went on—"go away from here—maybe to Wyoming!"

"Wyoming!" he echoed. In bewilderment he said: "What put Wyoming in yer head?"

Eagerly she went on:

"It's nice and healthy out there, and— There ain't no roses. You musn't expect too much. But it's fine, and there ain't no sickness, and—and that's what yer always growlin' about——"

She stopped short, discouraged by his look of blank astonishment. For a moment or so he was too much astonished to reply. Then all at once he broke into a fit of laughter. Sarcastically he said:

"The private car's in the repair shop. What got ye started on Wyoming? Did they talk about shippin' ye out there?"

She shook her head. Quickly she replied:

"Mrs. Bates was tellin' of it. Look at Steve; he was born out there."

Her husband gave a snort of contempt.

"That skunk!"

"Well, anyhow, he's husky, and——"

He looked at her closely for a moment, as if trying to read what was on her mind. Then suddenly he demanded:

"Did ye think of earnin' the price workin' for them ducks at five a week?"

She shook her head decisively as she replied:

"I ain't goin' to work for 'em, Heinie, not fer a minute. Ye can take me down and get me that job at the factory."

He smiled with satisfaction. More amiably he said:

"Soon as the noon whistle blows we'll go over."

Laying her hand on his arm, she looked up at his appealingly. Timidly she said:

"But be nice to them people, won't ye?—because some day maybe——"

He shrugged his shoulders as he answered with bitterness:

"They'll help us to get out o' this death-breedin' rathole—eh? Don't have no dream, Maggie, it just makes it worse when ye wake up—God knows it's bad enough as it is!"

Sitting on his knees and cuddling up to him like a little purring kitten, she buried her face in his big, square shoulders.

"Dear old Heinie!" she murmured, her voice choked with tears.

Stroking her hair fondly, he went on:

"Don't mind, little girl; I know how ye feel. Some day, the minute I can get the price, I'll take ye away anywhere's ye like, so we can have a real home, an' live like human bein's. Then ye'll be happy, won't ye?"

She put up her face passively to be kissed, and then slowly she replied:

"Sure—but—but—that won't be for a long time—will it?"

"Maybe in a couple of years."

She was silent and for a few moments neither spoke. Two years, she mused. If only she dare tell him! Then, maybe, they needn't go away at all. The neighborhood wasn't so bad as all that. There were worse. If he knew the truth he might be reconciled. Timidly she said:

"But, Heinie, this ain't so bad here as ye think it is—ye just imagine it."

"Do I?" he laughed carelessly. "The health officer says if folks live in dumps like this they gets consumption."

The young woman's heart fell. Her courage vanished. Impatiently she said:

"Gee, he's wise, ain't he?"

Her husband nodded, as he went on:

"Kids down here are weaklings, and don't grow up to amount to nothin'."

Irritably she answered:

"Oh, well, let's cut out talking about it. We can't help it."

He looked at her in surprise.

"Yer right, it don't help grumblin'—but it makes me sore."

"Ye didn't used to feel this way," she said with a sigh.

"No," he replied savagely, "my eyes wasn't opened then."

She shook her head sadly as she answered:

"Well, maybe things could be better——" Looking at him wistfully she added: "But yer feelin's ain't changed, Heinie, have they? Don't you remember how we used to talk and plan? Heinie, let me show you somethin'——"

Going to the bureau she took the book of Mother Goose rhymes from a drawer and, sitting on the arm of the chair beside him, held the book open before him. Gently she went on:

"Remember the night ye brought this home—before we talked to that health officer? Don't ye remember how we read it through and how we laughed over it together? I learned one of the

rhymes and ye learned one." Turning the page, she said: "Here's the one I learned." Turning another page, she added: "And here's the one you learned. I bet ye've forgotten it already."

Schultz laughed and put his arm about her affectionately.

"Not on yer life," he said. Then haltingly, looking very foolish, he recited slowly:

"Bye, Baby Bunting, papa's gone a hunting,
To get a little rabbit skin,
To wrap his Baby Bunting in."

Maggie listened in rapture, her hands clasped to her bosom.

"Oh, Heinie," she exclaimed, "you don't know how happy it all made me! Perhaps our life together was getting sort of every-day like. But you was lookin' forward with me—hopin'—and I knew what that meant. It proved that ye loved me." Touching his head with her lips she added pathetically: "Heinie, are things different now?"

He put his arms about her and drew her close to him. There was agitation in his voice as he answered:

"Why, Honey, the only difference is—that I care more and more for ye every day."

"Heinie!"

She clasped her hands joyously, like a child. He went on:

"And I feel jest as I did the day I bought that kid book home. And I always will. Don't ye ever forgot that. But I come to see that, fixed as we are, *it's wrong.*"

Rising from the chair, she went and put the book back in the drawer with a sigh. Then, as she came back, she said:

"Oh, but, Heinie, look at the kids that lives around here. They're happy, ain't they?"

"Yes, look at 'em!" he exclaimed sarcastically.

"Other people down here's satisfied with 'em," she said pleadingly.

"Because they don't know what a hell of a thing they're doin'."

Hysterically she burst out:

"They ain't doing a hell of a thing—they ain't! It's yer crazy way of seeing things!"

He looked at her seriously as he replied:

"Do ye think when them kids grow up to realize their sickly half-baked bodies don't give 'em no chance with other people, they'll thank the fools that brought 'em into the world? How'd ye like to have a kid of yer own cursin' ye for the very life ye give it?"

Hot tears filled her eyes. Her breast heaved with

emotion. His cruel, thoughtless words were killing her.

"No, no—don't say that!" she almost sobbed.

Unmindful of her agitation, he persisted. Finally he burst out:

"I'd rather kill it when it was born than send it up against a game like that!"

Quickly placing her hand over his mouth to prevent him from saying any more, she cried shrilly:

"Shut up, will ye? Shut up—shut up—shut up!"

He stared at her, not understanding, yet seeing something mysterious in her words and manner, something which he did not like. Suspiciously he approached her:

"Say, look at me—what's the matter with ye?"

Trembling she evaded his eyes. Confusedly she stammered:

"It's them—awful things ye say—ye shouldn't say 'em, Heinie. Ye shouldn't say 'em—even if they are true!"

He looked at her doubtfully for a moment. Then gravely he said:

"Is there anything ye ought to tell me?"

She made no answer, but looked away as if unable to meet the steady, questioning gaze in his frank, honest eyes. This was the time to tell him.

There might never again be a moment so opportune, yet somehow she could not. Try as she might, the words stuck in her throat. She feared his wrath, his reproaches. She would wait and see. Perhaps things would improve and they would be able to get away after all. Then in their far-away new home she could tell him everything. And if things didn't improve, if she was compelled to do what she didn't want to do, but which she would do if forced to it, why then—— Trembling in every limb she faltered:

"No, Heinie, no, of course not—it's them awful things ye say."

Breaking down, she laid her head on his shoulder and burst into tears. Clumsily, tenderly, he tried to console her.

"That's all right, Honey, don't you cry. We'll pull out o' here yet. There, now go and put on yer hat and coat and I'll take ye over to the factory."

She was about to do as he told her, when suddenly there came a rap at the door. The next instant it opened, and Mrs. Bates thrust her head in. With a comical grin she called out:

"Yer sassiety friends is returnin'."

A look of annoyance overspread Schultz's face as he sprang up and retreated towards the inner room.

"What do they want again?" he demanded in surly tone.

Mrs. Bates chuckled as she answered:

"Comin' back to see if Maggie wants the job."

"Tell 'em no!" thundered the stevedore. Going into the bedroom ready to barricade himself in he added gruffly:

"Don't let me see 'em. Tell 'em I'm out and get rid of 'em as soon as ye can."

Saying this, he left the room, slamming the door violently.

CHAPTER IX

WHEN the husband had disappeared, Mrs. Bates looked inquiringly at the young wife. Maggie knew well what the glance meant, but she shook her head despondently.

"Why not?" demanded the Irishwoman angrily.

"I couldn't—I simply couldn't—that's all," replied the young woman, the tears rolling down her pale cheeks.

Mrs. Bates threw up her hands in utter disapproval. To be afraid of a man to this extent was beyond her comprehension. The defunct Batesey was a hard man, especially when in liquor, but there was never a time when she couldn't speak out what was on her mind. Severely, she exclaimed:

"God save us, child! But ye're wrong. Ye oughter told him."

Maggie shook her head sorrowfully. Her neighbor was right, of course. It was absurd that she should have a secret of this kind from Heinie. It was wrong, it was unfair to him, but somehow she could not tell him. Dolefully she answered:

"I was too scared. He said if one ever come here he'd kill it——"

Mrs. Bates shrugged her shoulders and strode majestically up and down the room. No man would ever dare say anything like that to her, or she'd know the reason why. Indignantly she exclaimed:

"I'll talk to the pig-headed Dutchman!"

Maggie made a protesting gesture. Quickly she said:

"No, no, don't say a word—not now."

Stopping short, her neighbor turned and asked abruptly:

"What else can ye do?"

"Oh—I'll tell him—I'll—oh—to-morrow I'll tell him sure. Say, maybe I can go up to the house and tell that woman my fix, maybe she'll help me."

The Irishwoman gave her shoulders an incredulous shrug.

"Pshaw!" she exclaimed, with a gesture of contempt. She was about to relieve her feelings on the subject of rich folk in general, and the Burke-Smiths in particular, when suddenly there came a rap at the door.

"Hush!" whispered Maggie. "Here they come back! Don't get sassy to 'em now!"

The door opened and Steve put his head in.

cautiously to make sure that the coast was clear. On seeing who it was, Mrs. Bates made a quick warning gesture.

"Go away—Heinie's here!"

Instead of showing concern, the young man merely laughed. Leaning against the door jamb, he pointed his thumb up. Insolently he said:

"Beat it upstairs—someone wants to see ye about their wash."

Thinking it might be a good customer whose trade she would be sorry to lose, the Irishwoman hurried away. Her son waited until she was out of earshot, then, turning to Maggie, he whispered:

"Where's yer husband?"

She nodded in the direction of the other room. The youth winced. The proximity of the muscular stevedore was too close to be exactly pleasant, but he would take a chance anyhow. There was no time to be lost. Never again would he have such an opportunity for cracking the Burke-Smith crib. If Maggie would only help him, he could get away with the stuff all right, and there'd be a bit in it for her, too. Making an effort to appear amiable, he beckoned to her coaxingly:

"Come here."

The young woman hesitated. Any moment Heinie might come in, and then surely there would

be a fight. What had the crook got to say, anyway? He ought to know by this time that he was an unwelcome visitor. Drawing a little nearer, she said crossly:

"Well—what is it?"

"Say, did I get the dope right—yer going to work fer them guys?"

She looked at him, puzzled, wondering what interest it could have for him. Hesitatingly she answered:

"I don't know—why?"

Looking at her meaningly, he went on:

"Me mother was sayin' ye was hard up fer money——"

She nodded.

"I am."

"Bad?"

"Yes."

"Ye know where to get it, don't ye?" he said quickly with an insinuating smile.

"You can't tell me!" she retorted sharply.

Now she understood. He had heard that she had been offered employment with a wealthy family and he saw an opportunity to rob the house, with her as an accomplice inside. Merely at the thought a cold shiver ran down her spine. He laughed as he went on:

"I don't mean what you mean. Listen here—that place yer going to work in is a cinch."

Moving away from him, she exclaimed angrily:

"Now cut that talk out. I ain't going to listen to ye——"

He shrugged his shoulders as he went on persuasively:

"I ain't askin' ye ter steal. Come here, I can't holler at ye."

She stopped and looked at him. What did he mean? Could it be possible that he had something to propose whereby she could make some money honestly? Going nearer she said:

"What ye askin' me to do?"

"Jest get the dope on the place and give it to me."

"What fer?" she demanded, as if not understanding his meaning.

"When the time's right, ye pass me the sign and I go up and get the stuff."

She drew quickly away as if shocked, and yet he was quick to notice that his proposition did not arouse her to as much anger as before. She said nothing for a moment, and then, with some agitation, she exclaimed:

"I'd like to know who ye think ye talkin' to—what d'ye think——?"

Going quickly up to her, he whispered:

"Ye needn't to raise a finger—and I'll give ye half."

Incensed that he should think her so easy, she turned like a tigress and faced him. Fiercely she exclaimed:

"D'ye think I'd mix up in a thing like that? Now I know yer game I wouldn't even go to work up there."

She walked away, but he followed her. Good-naturedly he said:

"Come here, ye little idiot—talk won't hurt ye. Listen here!"

Involuntarily she obeyed him and went a little closer. Of course there was no harm in listening. She was not obliged to do what he told her. He went on hurriedly:

"There's enough stuff in that house to make us filthy with money. I'll do the whole business; ye just tip me off where to go, and when the place is clear. Ye get half and ye won't be mixed up in it noways. Ye're perfectly safe—ain't that all right?"

"It ain't that——" she began hesitatingly.

Impatient, not caring to hear what her objections were, full of his scheme, the youth abruptly interrupted her. In a whisper he went on:

"I'll tell ye the scheme—then ye can do as ye like—ain't that all right?"



"YE NEEDN'T RAISE A FINGER—AND I'LL GIVE YE HALF."

p. 162



She shook her head.

"I—I know I won't do it."

"Now listen," he said coaxingly. "Go to work up there and learn all ye can about the place. When ye got it all down pat, write it out in a little note and slip it in my room under me pillow—see? Set down a day and a time when ye want me to pull it off. On that day, bust a wash-basin by accident; then keep yer eyes open fer the exact minute they send fer the plumber. I'll be watchin' the house." Going quickly to the window he pulled down the blind and went on: "Then ye give me the signal by pullin' the blind down this way. See—leave it up at the top—and when the time comes pull it down. Got that? Then I'll come in as the plumber, make a quick clean-up and get away before the real plumber comes—ye get half, and ain't mixed in it at all. Ain't that great?"

She stood staring at him, listening and following his directions without protesting, and with no decided opposition. After a silence she shook her head.

"I—I wouldn't think of doin' it!"

He shrugged his shoulders as he replied carelessly:

"Sure—jest as ye like. But in case ye want a bunch o' money. Yer need it bad, don't ye?"

She made no answer, but watched him illustrating at the window. Seeing that she was interested he went on:

"Here's ye signal—blind up at the top and when the time comes pull it down that way, see? It means two or three hundred bucks fer ye."

Suddenly she looked up at him. The expression of disapproval in her face had given place to one of shrewd craftiness. Quickly she said:

"A hundred's all I need—I wouldn't touch more'n that."

Certain now that he had her in his power, he chuckled:

"Sure, I wouldn't have ye feel bad. Stick a note under my pillow. I'll treat ye right."

She was about to ask further questions, when, all at once, footsteps were heard coming down stairs. He put his fingers to his lips warningly.

"Cheese it," he whispered; "here's Mud!"

The young woman walked hurriedly away, and taking up some pots pretended to be busy at the stove. Steve leaned carelessly against the door jamb, grinning. The Irishwoman came in, panting and out of breath. Glaring angrily at her son, she exclaimed:

"What ye mean sendin' me chasin' upstairs when there's no one there?"

"Ye needed the exercise, Mud," he replied impudently. "The kid doctor said he could love ye fer yer money if ye wasn't so fat!"

Laughing at her with brutal good-nature, he opened the door and disappeared. The Irishwoman turned to her neighbor. With a worried look on her face she asked:

"What'd he do that fer, Maggie?"

The young woman made an impulsive movement forward. Indignantly she began:

"He come down here——"

She stopped short. It was on the tip of her tongue to make a confidant of the mother and tell her what her son was up to. Yet what was the use? It might spoil everything if she said anything. Evasively she replied:

"Oh, I don't know—he's drunk, I guess. He better keep out o' here or Heinie'll beat him up."

The Irishwoman gave a smothered exclamation of impatience.

"The young imp—bad 'cess to him!"

As she spoke, the bedroom door opened and Schultz appeared. He looked inquiringly at his wife as if surprised to see that she had made no preparations to go out.

"Ain't ye ready yet?" he asked.

She nodded carelessly as she replied:

"Jest wait a minute till them people come up. I jest want to tell 'em I can't take the job."

The stevedore chuckled.

"They're comin' back to chuck charity at us. Well, they don't come in—see? I'm sick of 'em."

Going to the door, he slipped the bolt. Maggie, who noticed what he had done, made a gesture of protest.

"Oh, Heinie—they offered me the job. I got to tell 'em nice that I don't want it."

Mrs. Bates nodded approval.

"Ye can write to 'em, Maggie; I got the address. She left me a card where to go fer medicine fer the sick kid." Drawing a card from her bosom and glancing at it she read: "Mrs. Burke-Smith, West 72d Street, and the business office is 62 Wall Street." Turning to the young woman she added in a low tone: "Ye'd better write and take the job."

The stevedore, who was standing at the window idly gazing into the court below, turned quickly on hearing the address. Snatching the card from Mrs. Bates's hands he exclaimed:

"Sixty-two Wall Street her office! Well, of all the brassy nerve——"

His wife and Mrs. Bates stared at him in amazement.

"What's the matter?" inquired Maggie.

He gave a snort of contempt as he went on excitedly:

"It's a lovely bunch of man-killing saints ye'd like me to be bowin' and scrapin' to around here! Say, if that preacher guy shows his mug in here I'll tear him to a pulp!"

"Are ye gettin' dippy?" exclaimed Maggie.

Not heeding her, he went on fiercely:

"I'll bounce that woman on her neck. I mean it!"

The women stared at him as if they thought he had suddenly gone crazy. Angrily Mrs. Bates exclaimed:

"Oh, g'wan, sit down—ye give me a pain!"

With growing excitement, he laughed derisively as he turned to his wife.

"Say, they're good to ye—ain't they?"

"Yes," she retorted angrily; "they is good to me."

"They're crazy to pull ye out o' this swill hole and see ye live like a human bein', ain't they?"

"Yes," she snapped, her eyes flashing; "they're nice folks. What's youse got agin' them?"

Sarcastically he went on:

"They're eatin' their hearts out 'cause ye ain't livin' in gold palaces on Fifth Avenue, and when ye get through kissin' the ground they walk on,

they're goin' to fix ye up fine and dandy, ain't they?"

"Yes, yes—yes," she answered blindly.

He laughed scornfully. Bitterly he went on:

"That's what ye think, but I'll put ye wise. Do ye know who owns this rathole ye live in? Do ye know who pulls down rent fer block after block of dumps like this? Do ye know who sidesteps fire laws and tenement laws—who makes ye breathe dirt—who'd send yer kids coughin' and spittin' to hell if ye dared to have any?"

"What d'ye mean?" demanded Maggie, growing pale.

"I mean," he thundered indignantly, as he slammed the card down on the table, "that that angel of charity and the whole bloodsuckin' crew is—Mrs. Burke-Smith, of 62 Wall Street!"

For a moment his words were succeeded by a dead silence. His violence had exhausted itself. The women were too much surprised to speak. Maggie grew paler, her bosom heaved convulsively, and the lines about her mouth hardened as presently she said quietly:

"Say, that's on the level? That woman owns these buildings?"

He nodded as he answered angrily:

"The whole damn block pays her blood money so

she can come down here in her glad rags and diamonds and chuck it at us in charity."

"Gee!" exclaimed Maggie, half to herself.

Löst in thought, she turned away and, going to the back window, stood in silence, gazing into the court below. So Mrs. Burke-Smith was the woman responsible for all these horrors from which they suffered, the woman at whose door must be laid the death from disease and exposure of all those poor little innocent babes! How could Heaven permit such wickedness? Surely now she need have no compunction! Would it be a sin, a crime, to rob such a woman as that? Did not all she possessed belong to the poor folk from whom she had taken it? Schultz watched her from the opposite side of the room, waiting for her to say something.

"Well?" he said finally. "Are ye wise now to the dirty deal yer gettin'?"

His wife left the window and, walking across the room, sat down at the table, her head bowed in deep thought. The stevedore watched her curiously for a few minutes. Then, jumping up and taking his cap, he exclaimed impatiently:

"Come on, let's fergit it and go to the factory."

He opened the door and stood waiting, but his wife, still absorbed in her own thoughts, made no move. With some irritation he said:

"Ain't ye comin'? Get on yer things!"

Before she could reply, Mr. Howland's voice was heard from downstairs.

"I say—up there!"

"There's the minister now!" exclaimed Mrs. Bates.

Hastily Maggie rose and went out into the landing. Leaning over the balustrade, she called out:

"Well?"

"Have you made up your mind yet?" demanded the voice.

There was a short pause, and then slowly the young woman answered:

"Yes—I'll come."

"Take the subway—that's the quickest. You have the address?" called out a shrill feminine voice which they recognized as that of Mrs. Burke-Smith.

"All right—I'll come!" said Maggie.

The footsteps died away and, coming back into the room, she shut the door after her, and stood before her husband defiant and sullen.

"What's got into ye?" he demanded angrily.

She did not answer. Losing his temper, he shook her roughly by the arm.

"Well——"

Looking up, with a stubborn expression on her face, she replied :

"Goin' to take the job, that's all!"

He staggered back in sheer astonishment. Hardly able to believe his ears, he exclaimed :

"After all I jest told yer?"

"Yep!" she replied calmly.

"What's the matter? Is ye crazy?"

"Jest goin', that's all. Can't I, if I want to?"

Losing his temper completely, he retorted angrily :

"Sure ye can, and stay there!"

"All right—I will."

Thoroughly disgusted, gesticulating violently, he thundered :

"Go anywhere's you please. G'wan up to that bunch, and git played fer a sucker. Maybe ye'll come back with some kind of sense banged into ye. I'm tired o' talking to ye!"

Rushing out into the hall, he slammed the door after him. Maggie ran to the door after him, and going to the landing called downstairs :

"Heinie, ye'll come and fetch me home nights, won't ye?"

There was no answer, and she heard the door slam downstairs. Returning, she stood quite still,

in deep thought. Mrs. Bates tried to console her. Sympathizingly she said:

"Sure, dearie, he'll come fer ye, don't worry."

Without a word, the young woman crossed to the wall, took down her hat and jacket and put them on in silence. Then, picking up the card from the table, she glanced at it and quietly slipped it in her pocket. After watching her nervously for a moment, the Irishwoman said:

"Are ye going to do that—what we was talking about?"

The young woman made no reply, but put on her jacket in silence. Anxiously Mrs. Bates went on: "Maybe I shouldn't ha' started ye off on this—if ye shouldn't git away with it—yer sich a child!"

Maggie paid no heed. To change the topic she looked up to her neighbor and said:

"Lend me a nickel fer carfare, will ye?"

The Irishwoman fumbled in her pocket, took out a purse and handed the young woman a coin, which she put in her pocket. With a wan smile she nodded to her and said:

"Thanks. So long!"

Going out on to the landing, she called upstairs in the direction of the Bates flat:

"So long, Steve!"

"What's that?" shouted back the youth, after a pause.

"I said so long—I'm goin' to work fer them people."

Then, without another word, she went down the stairs to the street.

CHAPTER X

THE Burke-Smith residence on Seventy-second Street West was one of the most imposing houses in that aristocratic neighborhood. Built entirely of white Italian marble, with a graceful portico and lofty windows of chaste design edged with green box plant, and a stately entrance guarded by gates of highly polished steel, it looked just what it was—the palatial, luxurious abode of one of the leaders of America's plutocracy.

Although of Irish descent, the family traced their American ancestry back many generations. They liked to believe and tell their friends that they came from the fighting Burkes, but this was only a pleasant fiction which deceived no one. One Burke-Smith had, indeed, fought against the British under Washington, but he was an exception. The male members of the family were not heroes. Dollars and cents were more in their line. They were shrewd in business, and to this, rather than to valor

or culture, they owed success in life. Coming originally from the South, where their money had been made in cotton, they became still richer in later years by numerous speculative deals, few of which would stand inspection, until to-day the Burke-Smith fortune was one of the biggest in the country, mostly invested in real estate, a high-sounding and convenient term which often covers all kinds of questionable investments, such as repulsive, broken-down tenements where the unfortunate pay exorbitant rents for unspeakable quarters, or places still more infamous where wretched social outcasts for a pittance barter away their souls. Of such investments, naturally, they did not boast. Only their confidential agents knew where they were, and the present owner, finding the income derived from them far superior to that to be had from any other kind of property, showed no disposition to change them.

Mrs. Burke-Smith had been a widow for many years. The mistress of her own fortune, she lived in a manner to suit her own tastes. She did not entertain much, for she had few friends, but she belonged to a number of literary and philanthropic societies and indulged her pet hobby of patronizing the poor, visiting them in ostentatious manner and urging them to mend

their ways, never remembering the source of her own income, conveniently forgetting that she took away with the left hand more than double of what she gave so grudgingly with the right. Yet at heart she was not a bad-hearted woman. She would have been greatly shocked if these inconsistencies had been put clearly before her. She was merely selfish, narrow, self-opinionated. Her money, in other words, had warped her judgment. Her affections she divided equally between her spoiled and pampered Japanese terrier, Bébé, and Alice, the only child of a dead sister, with a preference, only slightly disguised, for the obnoxious canine. Outside of these two she loved nobody—except herself.

Maggie Schultz had not been in the house long before she found this out. It was duly impressed upon her with great solemnity by Marie, the French maid, who declared impudently that there were only two persons in the household to whom she need pay special attention—the missis and Bébé. Miss Alice did not count. But Bébé must never be neglected for a minute. Usually Marie herself attended to the darling pet's wants, but if she was busy the duty would fall on Maggie's shoulders.

For the first few days the stevedore's wife felt awkward and out of her element. Of Mrs. Burke-

Smith she saw very little. Such instructions in regard to the sewing as were to be given were brought to her through the maid, a vicious, hot-tempered person for whom Maggie instantly conceived an intense dislike. The feeling of antagonism was mutual and, after the first few days, when the artificial mask incidental to new acquaintance had somewhat worn off, the Frenchwoman, jealous of the newcomer's presence in the house, tried to make her as miserable as possible. In a way Maggie was at her mercy, for Mrs. Burke-Smith, having implicit confidence in Marie, who had been with her many years, left the management of the household almost entirely to her. She had it in her power, therefore, to make things uncomfortable, and she availed herself of it to the limit. Maggie, although boiling within, bore it all as patiently as she could. Miss Alice was so good to her that she could hardly complain. She invited her into her room and made her presents of little trifles, trying in every way possible to make the young woman comfortable and to win her good will and affection. But even with this kind, sympathetic friend to whom she could always turn in her trouble, Maggie was far from being happy or contented. The elegant surroundings, the over-abundance of everything, all so different from what she had been so

long accustomed to, gave her a feeling of intense loneliness. At times she thought she could never stand it, and that she would run back home, but when she remembered Wyoming and the real reason of her coming, she changed her mind and tried to adapt herself to the novel position in which she found herself.

Steve, meantime, was growing more and more impatient, and constantly importuning her not to wait any longer. He said that he might have to leave New York, and then it would all fall through. If she wanted the money she should act quickly. For a day or so the young woman wavered, wrestling with her conscience. Distracted, torn by an agony of doubt and fear, she struggled between what she knew was right and her intense longing to get hold of the money. Then all at once she made up her mind. Goaded to exasperation by some unkindness of the French maid, she became frantic. Yes, she would do it, if only in revenge! That night Steve found under his pillow this laconic message:

"To-morrow, at three."

To Maggie, much to her disgust, had been confided the sacred duty of giving the dog his daily wash. It was a task that filled her with abhor-

ence, but to-day she welcomed it as it gave her the opportunity she wanted. Steve would expect her to make the signal at three o'clock. At ten minutes to three, therefore, she began her preparations to give the lap-dog his bath.

The bathroom where this solemn function took place was one on the third floor, which connected with a room used as a sewing room. It was a spacious, pleasant chamber, and here Maggie spent most of her time working. Situated at the front of the house, and overlooking the street, it opened directly on to the landing at the top of the broad staircase. At the opposite end of the room was a narrow passageway leading to the apartments occupied by Miss Alice. To the left, nearer the landing, was a small door connecting with another flight of stairs which led to the servants' quarters.

Nervously, hastily, Maggie set to work. Never before had Marie seen her so anxious to begin the distasteful job. Even Béb  appeared surprised and rather hurt at the unseemly haste with which he was picked up and flung willy-nilly into a mess of soapy water. There was no time to be lost. The plan agreed upon was that she should break the porcelain wash-basin while the bathing was going on, which, of course, would necessitate the calling in of a plumber.

While Maggie was thus engaged bathing the brute, the French maid was in the adjoining room laying out the things essential to the darling pet's toilet when he came out of his bath. To-day Marie was in a particularly ugly mood. Everything irritated her. She had never liked Maggie. She was jealous of the interest which Miss Alice took in her, and she especially resented her being intrusted with the care of the dog. Peevishly she called out into the next room:

"Here are Bébé's things! Be sure you dry her well!" Receiving no answer, she exclaimed angrily: "Don't you dare to put her in the water until you have taken zee temperature. You hear? Here is zee thermometer—Maggie, you hear?"

"Aw!" responded the young woman from the bathroom. "The water's all right."

The French maid stamped her foot. Impatiently she cried:

"You hear what I say! If you don't, I tell madame, now!"

Beside herself with rage, she went out on to the landing to call her mistress. No sooner had she disappeared than there was a terrific crash in the bathroom as if something heavy had fallen and done considerable damage. A moment later the bathroom door opened and Maggie appeared, pale

and nervous-looking, and absent-mindedly carrying Béb  upside down in a towel. Dumping the dog unceremoniously on the sofa, the young woman picked up his silver-mounted harness and began buckling on the straps. She was thus engaged when the maid re ntered from the landing. On seeing Maggie, the maid started with surprise.

"What?" she exclaimed in surprise. "You give B   her bath already?"

"Can't wash her," replied the young woman laconically. "The basin's broken!"

The maid looked at her in bewilderment.

"The basin is broken?" she echoed incredulously.

"Didn't you hear me say so?" snapped Maggie crossly.

The Frenchwoman's eyes flashed. Viciously she retorted:

"You break it?"

Maggie made no answer but, picking up the dog, began to adjust the creature's harness. The French maid shrugged her shoulders. Triumphantl , as if glad of the opportunity to attach blame to her enemy and get her into trouble, she exclaimed:

"A-ah! I must tell Madame. Poor B  ! She cannot have her bath."

Going to a speaking tube in the back hall, she

blew into it. There came an answering whistle, and then, speaking into it, she said:

"James, tell Madame ze wash-basin is broken and Bébé cannot have her bath."

Turning, she noticed that Maggie was putting on the dog's harness. Horrified, she exclaimed:

"What! You put on her harness before you rub her with ze towel?"

"I dried the mutt," answered Maggie, in a surly tone. "What's the matter with ye?"

The maid rolled her eyes and threw up her hands as if scandalized. Such *lèse majesté* to dear Bébé!

"Mutt! Mutt!" she exclaimed angrily. "Oh, when Madame hear what you call Bébé. Ugh! What a gutter girl you are to talk like dat!"

The stevedore's wife stopped in her work and looked up. Her eyes were flashing dangerously, and her hands clenched. Angrily she muttered between her teeth:

"Look out now—you!"

Not deigning to notice the threat, the maid shrugged her shoulders and pointed to the dog. Haughtily she said:

"Will you please rub her with zee towel an' don't talk?"

"I tell ye she's dry," scowled Maggie.

"What of zat?" said the maid. "She must have

zee friction on her skin—zee circulation. Now please rub her!”

Maggie threw off the harness and began to rub the canine with the towel so vigorously that the little beast, quite unaccustomed to such heroic treatment, set up a dismal howl. With an exclamation of horror the French maid rushed to her rescue.

“Not so rough!” she protested. “Don’t you dare to be rough with her. And don’t rub her here. Take her outside in zee fresh air, where she will breathe deeply. See she gets zee air, way deep into her lungs. Madame is most particular about that.”

“She is, is she?” said Maggie sarcastically, as she rose and gathered Béb , trembling with canine indignation, up in the towel. Bitterly she went on: “Some of her tenants in the house where I come from must be darned sorry they ain’t dogs!”

Carrying the animal like a package under her arm, she tossed her head defiantly at the Frenchwoman and went out by the servants’ door. She had no sooner disappeared than the voice of Mrs. Burke-Smith was heard calling on the main staircase:

“Marie! Marie!”

“Yes, Madame!” cried the maid, running to the landing.

Before she reached it Mrs. Burke-Smith entered, out of breath from the climb, her face crimson from anger.

"What's this I hear about a broken wash-basin?" she demanded, with asperity.

The maid spoke up quickly:

"Maggie broke it, Madame."

Her mistress looked at her in surprise.

"Maggie—how?"

Marie proceeded to explain:

"I say to her, give Béb  her bath, then she come back and say I can't—the basin is broke."

"Didn't she say how it was done?" demanded her mistress.

"No, Madame, she just say zee basin is broke, and she scowl at me."

"She scowled at you? Why?"

The girl shrugged her shoulders.

"She never cared to bathe B   ——"

"Indeed!" exclaimed her employer, elevating her eyebrows. "Why not? Has she ever objected?"

"Not in so many words, Madame, but I can see she does not like to."

Mrs. Burke-Smith shrugged her shoulders. Haughtily she said:

"It is not a question of what she likes—isn't she fond of the dog?"

The maid shook her head. Sorrowfully she replied :

"Oh, no—I am sure she does not love Bébé—not as we do, Madame."

"Has she ever dared to abuse her?"

"No, no, Madame, she would not dare! I should tell Madame at once. But it is plain she does not love Bébé."

"I am sorry to hear that," said her mistress. "I thought she was fond of animals. She seemed to be at first—that's partly why I let her come—for Bébé's sake——"

The maid nodded.

"She is at first—very fond—she pet her and play with her most all the time. Then, suddenly, she change——"

"How so?"

"One day I show her Bébé's embroidered coat and her silver brushes and her best harness with the gold name plate. I thought it would please her to see them—but no, it make her very angry——"

Mrs. Burke-Smith shook her head. Peevishly she replied :

"Discontented, I suppose. They are all alike!"

"Oui, Madame. She say to me—shaking the harness so in my face—look—all that for a damned cur!"

Scandalized, Mrs. Burke-Smith recoiled in horror.

"Such language!" she exclaimed.

Hypocritically, the maid covered her face with her pocket handkerchief.

"And since then," she sobbed, "she has never cared for Béb !"

Mrs. Burke-Smith fumed with indignation.

"How dared she talk that way in my house?" she exclaimed angrily.

The maid shrugged her shoulders.

"Oh, sometimes she swear like the—devil!"

"Impossible!" ejaculated her mistress, almost too shocked for utterance. Weakly, she asked: "Does B    hear her swear?"

The maid nodded.

"Oh, Madame—the poor B   , she look so horrified!"

Suddenly the dog barked on the servants' stairs and Maggie's voice was heard scolding her. Marie quickly attracted her mistress' attention to the direction of the sound.

"Listen to that, Madame!"

As she spoke, Maggie pushed the door open and entered. At first she did not see the others. She was carrying the dog in her arms, trying to keep her quiet by shaking her. Angrily, she exclaimed:

"Aw! Shut up, ye mutt!"

Boiling over with indignation at this supreme insult done her pet, Mrs. Burke-Smith faced the young sewing woman. Wrathfully she exclaimed:

"Maggie—what's the meaning of this?"

Taken by surprise, the young woman was so startled that she nearly dropped the dog out of her arms. Thinking that her employer was safe downstairs, Mrs. Burke-Smith was the last person in the world she expected to see. It was very awkward, for time was getting on. It was already past three, and no doubt Steve was already watching the house, waiting for the signal. If the old lady remained there everything would be spoiled. Nervous and confused, she waited in silence to hear what her mistress had to say. Mrs. Burke-Smith went on severely:

"I am surprised that you dare speak so to a poor dumb brute!"

"She snapped at me!" replied Maggie sullenly.

"Impossible! Bébé wouldn't do such a thing."

"Wouldn't she? Look at that!" said the young woman, as she showed a red mark on her wrist.

"Not unless she were goaded to it," said Mrs. Burke-Smith majestically. Severely she commanded: "Give her to Marie!"

The young woman sullenly handed the dog to

the maid, and its fond mistress stroked its head affectionately.

"Poor Bébé!" Turning to the sewing woman, she went on sternly:

"I hear that you sometimes swear at her."

"I—never."

"Oh, Madame!" exclaimed the French maid, as if overwhelmed at the falsehood.

"I tell ye——" protested the young woman.

"Maggie!" said Mrs. Burke-Smith, raising a finger warningly. "Surely you wouldn't tell a falsehood?"

But the stevedore's wife persisted.

"I tell ye——"

"Have a care!" thundered her employer.

"Well——" stammered the young woman, "sometimes I swear to myself——"

Mrs. Burke-Smith made a gesture of horror.

"How vulgar!" she exclaimed. "Think—swearing to yourself—and you might be such a nice young woman. Don't you ever again swear before Bébé!" Turning to the dog and contemplating it fondly, she went on: "I am sure your manner is depressing her. Aren't you fond of the little darling?"

Hesitatingly the young woman replied:

"Well——"

"Well, aren't you?" snapped her mistress.

"I wouldn't do her no hurt——"

"You *should* be fond of her," went on Mrs. Burke-Smith angrily. "That's one reason why I allowed you to come here. In this house we are sweet and loving to God's animals as we are to God's children. Don't you understand that?"

Looking away, a bitter smile on her face, the young woman replied civilly:

"Yes'm."

Mrs. Burke-Smith turned toward the bathroom, the door of which was open. Pointing to the débris on the floor, she demanded severely:

"How did that basin become broken?"

Startled by the suddenness of the question, Maggie looked in the direction indicated. Nervously she stammered:

"Why—a bottle fell off'n the shelf and busted through——"

"*How* did you say?" snapped her mistress, in a shrill, threatening voice.

"A bottle fell off'n——" faltered the girl.

"How?"

"A bottle fell off'n the shelf, I said——"

Beside herself with anger, Mrs. Burke-Smith shook her finger in the girl's face.

"Don't you mean to tell me that you knocked the bottle off the shelf? Isn't that it?"

"Yes'm"—stammered Maggie; "I didn't mean to——"

"You should have said that at first without prompting. In this house we speak nothing but the entire and absolute truth. I expect you to do the same."

"Yes'm," replied the girl contritely.

Severely, the mistress went on:

"Have you any objections to giving Bébé her bath?"

"I always do what I'm told," answered Maggie sullenly.

"But do you do it cheerfully?"

Maggie shrugged her shoulders.

"I ain't kicking," she said curtly.

Mrs. Burke-Smith looked at her in silent amazement. When she had somewhat recovered, she said indignantly:

"You are a very difficult person. I should think when you know we are trying to help you on"—she stopped short, exclaiming: "Ah, well, I am doing my best!" Then, with a gesture of resignation, she turned to the maid. "Marie," she said, "go and telephone for the plumber immediately." Again addressing Maggie, she added: "The min-

ute the basin is replaced you are to give Béb  her bath."

Marie had already left the room, and Maggie, feeling that the crisis was rapidly approaching, grew momentarily more nervous. In suppressed excitement, she replied:

"Yes'm."

Going to the window, she toyed with the blind cord in an agitated manner, staring the while out of the window as if looking for some one. Mrs. Burke-Smith, who saw nothing in her actions but the natural sulkiness and obstinacy of her class, watched her with an expression of discouragement. Speaking sharply, she said:

"And henceforth no more of this sullen acquiescence to what is required of you. Do you understand?"

Absent-minded, her thoughts all concentrated on the critical business on hand, Maggie made no reply.

"Do you hear?" thundered her mistress.

"Yes'm."

Tossing her head, Mrs. Burke-Smith went on:

"I mean that in this house we do the tasks that Providence has imposed upon us willingly and cheerfully, and in a proper Christian spirit." More amiably she went on: "I do not wish to be cross

with you, Maggie, I merely want you to imbue into your mind the utter futility of——” Seeing that the young woman paid no attention, she stopped short and exclaimed: “Are you listening to me or are you staring out of that window?” Angrily she went on: “See that shade, up to the top, the sun streaming in, fading my carpets! How often must I tell you——”

Furious, the old lady started toward the window to do herself what her menials had neglected to do. Realizing that Steve, watching outside, would interpret it as a signal, Maggie made a movement as if to stop her, but it was too late. There was no retreat possible now. Mrs. Burke-Smith, by the mere pulling down of a blind, had invited a burglar to come in and rob her home. Suppressing an involuntary ejaculation, Maggie put her hand over her mouth. Mrs. Burke-Smith looked at her in surprise.

“What’s the matter?” she asked.

“Nothing, ma’am,” replied the young woman weakly.

Satisfied now that the blinds were drawn and her carpets protected from the sun, Mrs. Burke-Smith exclaimed with a sigh of martyrdom:

“Dear me, it’s so hard to train you girls!”

Sweeping majestically out into the hall, she en-

countered Marie at the head of the stairs. Out of breath, the French maid gasped:

“The plumber, he come at once, Madame.”

“Very well,” said her mistress graciously. “When he does I’ll see him and send him up to repair the damage.”

CHAPTER XI

WHEN she saw that her mistress was safely out of hearing, Marie returned to the room where Maggie still stood, nervous and trembling. The French maid snapped spitefully at her as she came in. Her dark eyes flashing venomously, she exclaimed:

"You better be careful—you!"

Surprised at this new attack, the stevedore's wife looked up. She had had about enough of this menial's impudence, but the onslaught was so sudden and spiteful that she could not help smiling. Saucily she said:

"What's ailing ye?"

The maid shook her head mysteriously. Vindictively she said:

"I know about the basin——"

Startled, the stevedore's wife looked at her with apprehension. Was she only bluffing, or did she know?

The maid shrugged her shoulders. Significantly she went on:

"Ze bottle do not fall from ze shelf by accident."

Now thoroughly frightened, convinced that the whole plot was discovered, and that the police had already been summoned to arrest her, the young woman stammered fearfully:

"What do ye mean—I——"

"You break ze basin on purpose!" exclaimed the maid—"that's what I mean."

Thus driven to the wall, Maggie turned on her fiercely.

"Why do ye think that?" she demanded.

"Because you hate to wash poor Bébé."

"Oh!" exclaimed the stevedore's wife, with a sigh of relief. "Well, maybe you'd just better tend to yer own business."

The maid stamped her foot.

"It is my business when you hate Bébé! Yesterday you let her go into the street without her coat. I did not tell Madame, but if I should——"

Angrily Marie gathered the harness, blankets, and the rest of the canine paraphernalia from the sofa.

"Poor Bébé!—her nose is hot——"

"Poor Bébé!"—mimicked Maggie wrathfully. "Say, if a kid I know had the price of a fancy coat like that for food and warmth when it was born, it wouldn't be dying in the hospital now!"

"Ah, ze sick baby!" retorted the maid, turning up her nose. "Zat is why you hate Bébé? You are jealous because she have fine things—because we love her. Why should we not? It is *she* belongs to us—not ze baby in ze hospital. Mon Dieu, what do you want?"

The stevedore's wife was fast losing patience. Only a little more provocation and she felt that they would come to blows. Sharply she said:

"Ye needn't talk about that now—it makes me sore."

But the Frenchwoman was determined to tease her. Holding the dog up, she exclaimed tauntingly:

"See the coat—it is very fine—very expensive—why don't you steal it to give to some baby friend where you come from?"

Maggie's eyes flashed. Clenching her fist, she advanced toward her enemy.

"Cut that!" she commanded threateningly.

The maid merely shrugged her shoulders. Impudently she went on:

"You are what you'd call ze little anarchist——"

Her patience exhausted, Maggie was just about to spring forward and slap the woman's face when, suddenly, the door on the opposite side of the hall opened, and Alice called out:

"Marie, where are you? I am coming out in a second to be hooked up."

"Oui, mademoiselle——" Turning again to Maggie, the maid went on: "She is the only person here you would not stick with a knife—you think she is wonderful because she go to ze slums to sing to ze sick baby. But she don't hate Bébé. How you 'count for that, hey?"

"She would if she was in my place," replied Maggie doggedly.

The maid shrugged her shoulders as she continued:

"Maybe she is not so full of pity to that strange child as you think. Maybe your wonderful lady go to ze dirty tenement for some other reason, eh?" Laughing, she added: "What a silly fool you are! All you t'ink of is sick babies."

Maggie's eyes flashed angrily. Resenting this insinuation in regard to her friend, she retorted contemptuously:

"And all you can think of is a man—I 'spose yer mean she's chasin' after the young doctor——"

The verbal combat would have continued, only at that moment Alice opened the door of her bedroom. She was dressing to go out, and the back of her waist was all unbuttoned. Aside to the stevedore's wife Marie whispered sneeringly:

"Sh! Do not be so wise, or you will cease to be her sweet little pet!"

"I am all ready to be fastened up now!" said Alice amiably.

"Oui, Mademoiselle," said the maid, with hypocritical politeness. "I'll just put Bébé in her basket."

Alice smiled significantly at Maggie. Quickly she said:

"Oh, you needn't bother. Maggie will help me. I didn't know she was here."

Resenting this encroachment by a mere sewing woman, the Frenchwoman scowled. Protestingly she answered:

"But, mademoiselle, I am ready! I am mademoiselle's maid——"

The young girl waved her impatiently away. Indifferently she replied:

"Oh—I'm sure Maggie doesn't mind. She's learning beautifully."

The maid gave her shoulders a vicious shrug. Angrily she said:

"*Très bien, mademoiselle. C'est comme vous voulez!*"

The stevedore's wife began to button the young girl's waist. In a grateful undertone she said:

"I'm glad I'm learnin' to suit ye."

Alice laughed, as she answered lightly:

"Oh, you'll be a splendid maid some day." Pointing to a flower which she carried in her hand, she went on pleasantly: "See the pretty rose Dr. Taylor brought me!" Turning to the French maid, she said: "Marie, will you bring that silver mug from the other room?"

The maid looked up quickly, a gleam of triumph in her eye.

"Mademoiselle means ze silver baby mug."

"Yes—yes——" said the young girl. "Fill it with water and bring it to me."

The maid made no attempt to move. Looking significantly at Maggie, she said:

"I have not seen ze mug two whole days."

Still busy buttoning the waist, Maggie felt herself turn hot and cold in turns. Her fingers trembled so that as many buttons came undone as she fastened. Why had she been so weak and yielded to the temptation to take the baby mug? She simply could not resist. It had seemed to her that more than anything else in the world she craved for that baby mug, and at night when she had gone home, she had put it stealthily in her shawl and buried it with the rest of her treasures in the cradle. Who could have thought that the young lady would ask for it? Nobody seemed to have any use for it,

and she needed it so badly. She felt sick and dizzy. Her head seemed to swim round as she heard her young mistress say:

"It must have been carried downstairs. Ask in the pantry."

The maid shook her head. Her eyes still fixed on the stevedore's wife, she said positively:

"I ask. I look everywhere. It is gone—like other things!"

"Well—no matter," said Alice carelessly. "If you can't find that bring anything. I want to put the flower in it."

Reluctantly the maid turned to go.

"Oui, mademoiselle. But do you not zink it strange?"

Her young mistress waved her impatiently away.

"You needn't bother, Marie."

"As you wish, mademoiselle."

Stifling her anger, and with a vindictive, vicious glance at Maggie, the Frenchwoman left the room, taking Bébé with her.

For a few moments after her departure nothing was said. Alice seemed lost in thought, while the stevedore's wife, growing more and more nervous each moment, fumbled clumsily as she fastened the gown. After a pause, the young girl said:

"I'm sorry the mug is lost. I thought that perhaps you might like to have it, Maggie."

The young woman staggered back. Almost choking with emotion, she exclaimed:

"Oh, was ye goin' to give it to me, miss?"

The girl nodded. Kindly she replied:

"Wouldn't you have liked it?"

The stevedore's wife dropped into a chair. Bursting into tears, she moaned:

"Oh, ye're so good to me—ye're so good to me! Why, it was just knockin' around—nobody seemed to want it——"

Alice watched her in silence. She had understood the situation from the first, yet there was no anger in the young girl's face—only kindly pity. Touched by sympathy and compassion, it was not in her heart to nourish resentment. Why should she judge others? How did she know what she herself would do, if tempted? Why should she judge this poor woman? How did she know to what temptation she was put? She believed Maggie was honest by nature. If she had taken something that did not belong to her, it was merely because she had acted on the impulse. The mug had attracted her, appealed to her, and she had not been able to resist it.

"Don't cry," she said kindly. "Why didn't you

come and tell me if you wanted it? If you had asked me, you could have had it gladly."

So much sympathy and kindness were almost more than the young woman could bear. Why was this young girl so good when the hand of every one else in the world was raised against her? Burying her head in Alice's skirts, she moaned:

"Oh, ye're so good—ye're so good!"

"Besides," went on the young girl, with a smile, "then I should have had the pleasure of giving it to you."

The stevedore's wife buried her face in her hands. Bursting into a hysterical outburst of tears, she sobbed:

"I'm so sorry—so sorry!"

"There, there," said Alice consolingly, "it won't happen again, I know. Whenever you see any little thing that no one else cares about, and you think you would like to have it, come and ask for it first—will you?"

But Maggie was too much overwrought to listen. Hysterically, she sobbed:

"Oh, I know I'm bad—I know I'm bad—but I can't help it——"

"Try, dear," said the young girl earnestly. "I'll help you."

Maggie shook her head disconsolately.

"You can't," she sobbed.

"I'm sure I can. Try, won't you?"

"Oh, it isn't that," said the stevedore's wife quickly. "I want to be good all right enough—I mean the way you call good—I'd give anything to be that—just for your sake. But, sometimes, there's somethin' you've got to do that's greater——"

Alice looked at her in astonishment.

"Greater than doing right?" she exclaimed, not understanding.

The young woman nodded, as she went on exaltedly:

"That's the word—'right!' That's what I was drivin' at! Bein' right's greater'n bein' good—an' it's different. Somehow," she added sadly, "the two don't fit."

Kindly, Alice put a hand on her shoulder. Sympathetically, she said:

"You poor dear—have you come to find it like that? Have you had to face some problem all by yourself?"

The young wife smiled bitterly, as she answered:

"All by myself—yes—that's the difference! It's easy enough bein' good, because everybody agrees about it, but in doin' right there's nothin' to back ye up but your own sense."

Quietly, patiently, Alice tried to draw her out.

"Come," she said, "now you've told me this much, you'll tell me the rest—then we'll find out what to do."

The young woman shook her head. Looking away, she answered:

"It wouldn't be any use——"

"Two heads are better than one, you know," suggested Alice.

"Not in this—I've got to go it alone."

"I'm sorry."

The young woman looked up. Quickly she exclaimed:

"Aw, don't feel hurt. If I could ask advice, there's nobody in the world I'd come to as soon as I would to you, but to see this thing as I do yer just have to be me——"

Alice nodded. Kindly she replied:

"I understand, dear. We are all troubled with just such problems that no one else can solve for us. I have one, too—but I'm selfish to speak of it. I can see in your eyes that yours is far deeper and more important than mine. But whatever it is, I want you to promise me—promise me you won't take anything again without asking for it, will you? Because you will find in the end that such things can never help you."

Gratefully Maggie took both her hands. With emotion she exclaimed:

"I swear I'll do the square thing by ye as long as I live!"

Alice smiled.

"Will you, dearie? and you won't——"

"Never!" replied Maggie fervently.

Changing the subject, Alice looked out of the window. After standing there a few minutes in silence, she returned and said:

"Mrs. Burke-Smith says I must wait and go with her to the tenement in the morning."

Maggie smiled faintly as she replied:

"I guess the waitin'll seem like years to that poor kid!"

Alice nodded. Anxiously she said:

"The doctor telephoned her to let me go this afternoon, but I'm afraid it won't do much good."

"She don't like the doctor, does she?" smiled Maggie.

"I think *he* is her real objection," laughed the young girl.

Maggie relapsed into silence. After a pause she asked:

"Does she say ye can't marry him?"

Alice laughed. Jestingly she exclaimed:

"Lady's maids shouldn't ask such questions."

"I'm yer friend, too, ye said," replied Maggie seriously.

"Of course you are!" laughed Alice, giving the stevedore's wife a little squeeze. Lightly she went on: "Well, it's never been discussed, but I've no doubt she would. That's my little problem!"

"He's a good feller, ain't he?" demanded Maggie.

"Splendid—none better in the world!"

The young woman was busy fastening her young mistress' collar, when suddenly the diamond brooch flew out of her hand and dropped on the floor.

"Oh, gee!" she exclaimed.

"What is it?" demanded Alice.

Maggie picked up the brooch, looked at it a moment, and then passed it to her mistress.

"I busted it!" she said apologetically.

"It doesn't matter," laughed Alice carelessly, "it was loose anyway."

"I'm awful sorry," said Maggie, examining the trinket with dismay.

Alice laughed merrily as she replied:

"I'll make a capital lady's maid of you yet. Now put it in the top drawer in my bureau. I must hurry downstairs."

"Yes'm."

Her young mistress started toward her room,

when suddenly the stevedore's wife stopped her. Timidly she said:

"Oh, Miss Alice!"

The young girl stopped.

"Well?"

"Do ye care fer that feller?"

"Why—yes," she replied hesitatingly.

"Then why don't yer——"

Smiling in spite of herself, the young girl asked:

"Why don't I what?"

"Go an' sing to that kid?"

The young girl shook her head.

"If I should disobey my aunt, I don't know what she would do. She might never let me come back."

"What of it? Marry the doctor."

"Why, Maggie! I'm surprised at you!"

"That's what I'd do," said the young woman doggedly, "go to that dyin' kid and marry the doctor!"

Laughing awkwardly, Alice answered:

"I'm Mrs. Burke-Smith's ward, and I haven't a dollar of my own until I come of age. I must respect her authority."

Maggie shrugged her shoulders.

"An' do what she tells ye and be good, I suppose. There's a kid, with only a few hours to live—and I guess he sort o' knows it, an' he's layin'

there eatin' his baby heart out because ye haven't come. His little face is turned toward the door, and his hungry little eyes is watchin' fer ye. Say, ye don't know how——"

"Don't! Don't!" exclaimed the young girl, stopping up her ears so she could not listen further.

"Don't ye see?" cried Maggie exultingly. "Yer heart tells ye ye ought to go, but ye keep telling yerself ye ought to mind that old woman, even if ye know she's selfish. Well, that's what I've been drivin' at. That's the very game I'm up against. It's either bein' good, as people tell ye, or doin' right as yer heart tells ye. One's easy an' the other's hard."

Seized by a sudden impulse, Alice turned back and, stooping down, gave the young woman an affectionate kiss. Then, quickly, she hurried into her own room. The young woman looked after her and shook her head sagaciously.

"She'll go, all right!" she muttered to herself.

She stood motionless, looking after her. How good she was, she mused. If they were all like that, there would be no class bitterness, no class hatred. How ashamed she was now that she had taken the mug without asking! And now there was this other affair, much more serious. Oh, if only she had never listened to Steve! She would will-

ingly give her left hand if she could only recall it. Glancing at the clock she saw that it was a quarter past three. She wondered why he had not come in answer to the signal. Perhaps he had abandoned the job. With all her soul she wished he had! All at once the front-door bell downstairs rang violently. She stopped short and, retracing her steps, her heart beating tumultuously, ran to the top of the stairs. Had the critical moment come? Was that Steve? Leaning over the banister, she listened intently below. In a few moments that seemed like years, voices were heard coming near. She heard the French maid speaking to some one. The voices came still nearer. The next moment Marie appeared. As the French maid entered she turned round and addressed some one behind her:

"Zis way, please, and don't scratch ze wall wid ze tools."

CHAPTER XII

WHITE as in death, trembling like a leaf, Maggie waited, in an agony of suspense. The nerve strain was terrible. Why had she begun this thing? How could she ever have believed that happiness could come of the commission of a crime? She realized the utter futility of it all now, but too late. She had done her unborn child a far greater wrong than by merely bringing into the world amid unsanitary conditions. She had made its mother a thief! But remorse, regrets were quite useless now. What was done could not be recalled. Striving, her hand clasped to her bosom, to quiet the violent beating of her heart, she stared, wild-eyed, over the French-woman's shoulders, to see who was following her.

As the maid came in she gave the sewing woman a malevolent glance. Triumphantly she exclaimed:

"Oh, soon now ze sink will be fixed. Den you will wash Bébé, eh?"

But Maggie was not listening. Her gaze was

fixed behind her, at the figure of a man, dressed in workman's clothes, who stood in the doorway. It was Steve. In his hand he carried a tool bag and a new china wash basin.

"Over zis way, please!" said the maid haughtily, going toward the bathroom and beckoning him to follow.

Marie disappeared, and as the youth followed her across the room, he stopped long enough to make a significant sign to Maggie. Then quickly he also disappeared into the bathroom. Still standing motionless, so nervous that she had to clench her teeth to prevent herself from calling out, breathing in short, spasmodic gasps, the stevedore's wife listened to what was transpiring in the other room. She heard a low murmur of voices, and now and then the sound of a tool dropping on the floor. Suddenly Marie appeared, a smile of triumph on her sour, vindictive face. As she passed through to the landing, she could not resist taunting her enemy once more.

"Soon now you will wash Bébé, eh?"

With this parting shot she bounced out of the room and proceeded downstairs. As soon as she thought she would not be seen, Maggie ran to the balustrade and, cautiously leaning over, watched the maid until she had disappeared from view.

Then, coming back into the room, she went quickly to the door of the bathroom. In a low whisper she said:

"All right now."

The youth came to the door and peeped cautiously in.

"Sweetie gone?" he grinned.

Reassured, he advanced boldly into the room. Smiling at the young woman, he said sarcastically:

"Say, why didn't ye jerk that blind right off the winder while ye was at it? Nobody wants it."

She hesitated a moment before she answered. Then slowly she said:

"I wanted to be sure ye saw the signal."

"I saw it, all right," he chuckled.

Anxiously she went on:

"What did ye come up so quick fer? They may think it's funny."

Shrugging his shoulders, he replied carelessly:

"Got to take a chance on that—give us that much more time fer business before the real plumber comes!"

"Ye want to git a move on," she said earnestly.

He chuckled as he went on cheerfully:

"Leave it to me, kid. It'll take half an hour to get a man here from O'Keefe's. I'll have this jew-

elry store trimmed some before then. I'm going downstairs to pluck the sugar out of the old lady's cup while she's drinking tea. Maybe I'll take tea with her!"

"Don't stand chinnin' here," she said impatiently.

"Don't get excited!" he grinned, mimicking her. Drawing nearer to her, with a sensual leer on his face, he added impudently:

"I don't care how long I stay with you!"

She recoiled quickly, as from something unclean.

"Ye've been drinkin'!" she exclaimed, in a tone of disgust. "Now ye'll spoil everything!"

"Soft pedal!" he retorted, with a good-natured grunt. Leaving her alone and turning to inspect the room, he went on in jocular manner: "I was workin' these diamond mines when you was stealin' flowers fer yer teacher."

As he spoke, the door handle of Alice's room was turned.

"Cheese it!" cried Maggie warningly.

She did not speak too soon. As Steve became once more engrossed in his work, and fumbled with his tools, pretending to be busy, Alice came out of her room fully dressed for the street, and carrying in her hand a small bag. She paid no attention to the man or to Maggie, but passed through the room on to the landing and went downstairs. When she

was safely out of hearing, Steve pointed to the room just vacated by Mrs. Burke-Smith's niece.

"What's in there?" he whispered.

The young woman frowned and went quickly to close the door.

"There ain't nothin' in there!" Sharply she added: "We don't want nothin' she's got."

The youth looked at her incredulously. Mockingly he exclaimed:

"Oh, don't we? Playin' favorites, are ye?" Taking a piece of paper from his pocket, he began to examine it carefully, muttering: "Now, let's try and size it up." After studying it for a moment, he looked up and said: "That's a peach of a diagram you drew—ever go to school?" Pointing to something on the paper, he added: "This is the bathroom—where the basin is?"

"Yes," she nodded.

"The door in there lets me out into the hall, hey?"

"Yes."

Referring again to the diagram, he asked:

"Now, here's the old woman's room—where's that?"

"Right under this one," she whispered.

Pointing down, he exclaimed with a grimace:

"Huh!"

"Yes," she nodded.

"That's all I want," he went on, putting the paper back in his pocket. "The old girl gets out of a cab an hour ago with enough stuff on her to break her back. Where is she now?"

"She's changed her dress an' took her jewels all off."

He laughed as he answered grimly:

"She's going to lose them jewels so quick she'll think she's a show girl. Where are they kept?"

"In a box in the big bureau drawer—but it's always kept locked."

He laughed mockingly.

"Oh, really!" he retorted. "Maybe, if I'm strong, I can break in with a stalk of asparagus. Gee, but ye're the wise maid—are ye sure ye know what ye're talkin' about?"

"Sure," she faltered.

"And the stuff is where yer say it is? Ye know, if I go aroun' the house breakin' up furniture, somebody might tell me to stop."

"I've seen her put it there often."

"In the big bureau drawer?"

"Yes."

Sarcastically he said:

"And not in father's safe or up the chimney?"

Impatiently he added: "Say, if ye bungle this—I'll eat ye, see? Who's on the floor below now?"

"Just the ole woman, I guess,"

"Yer guess?" he retorted angrily. "Why ain't ye got these things doped out fer me?"

Hesitatingly she answered:

"The servants stays way downstairs an' Miss Alice is gone out."

Pointing to the stairs, he said commandingly:

"See if grandma's in her room now."

Obeying him, she went to the head of the stairs and peered cautiously down. Then slowly she came back into the room. Nervously she said:

"Yes, she's there."

"Fine!" he exclaimed.

Looking at him inquiringly, she asked timidly:

"What ye goin' to do?"

"Strangle her!"

She opened her mouth to scream, but before she could make a sound he had clapped his hand over her mouth. Angrily he said:

"Hist! ye damned little monkey—don't ye know when I'm joshin'?"

As he released her she said reproachfully:

"Oh, Steve, what did ye drink for?"

"Suppress it," he retorted. "Now, listen. I'm going back there and hammer on that basin. Pretty

soon the front door bell will ring. Can ye hear it up here?"

"Yes, easy."

"A feller will come in with a bill fer winder washin'—it ain't fer this house, but he ain't speakin' good English an' don't understand. There's a row and the madam has to go downstairs to settle it. Understand?"

The young woman nodded. It was a scheme to leave the floor empty.

"But s'pose she don't go down?" she inquired.

"Then he'll fuss up that front door mat till everybody in the house goes down—except me. That gag's good fer about six minutes; so from the time that bell rings I got to work quick—see? An' I got to know jes' what I'm doin'—now get it straight. The room is under this?"

"Yes."

Pointing to a corner, he went on:

"The bureau in that corner?"

"Yes."

"Top drawer?"

"Yes—*one* of the top drawers," she corrected.

"What?" he exclaimed angrily. "Ye little pin-head—why didn't ye say there was more?"

Frightened, she stammered:

"Why—I—there's two——"

"Which one is it?" he demanded.

"The—the right——"

"Which?"

"The right."

"Think, now!" he exclaimed warningly. "By God, if ye muff this—which is yer right hand?"

Docilely she raised her right hand. After glaring fiercely at her for a moment, he went to the door and carefully closed it.

"Keep these shut!" he ordered. Then, pointing to the bathroom, he went on:

"I'll go in there an' start hammerin'. A minute after the front-door bell rings the hammerin' stops. Then ye'll know I've got out into the hall through the door in there." Pointing to the servants' stairs, he added: "If anyone comes up them back stairs, ye got to keep 'em here till the hammerin' starts again. Can ye do that?"

She nodded. Her heart was thumping so violently that she thought it would burst, but there was no help for it now. The thing must go on.

"I got to—that's all!" she answered desperately.

Shaking his fist threateningly, the crook snapped back:

"Ye bet ye have! If ye don't——" More conciliatory he went on: "Ye know this is easy if ye

don't throw a fit—an' there's a nice little bunch o' stuff in it fer *you*."

Turning away her head, so he could not see the tears in her eyes, she answered:

"I don't want nothin' but jest enough to git to Wyoming. I wouldn't touch any more."

He shrugged his shoulders indifferently as he answered:

"We won't scrap about that. I got an extravagant mother to support myself."

With a sinister laugh, he drew a box of cigarettes from his pocket and, selecting one with great deliberation, put it in his mouth. Then, taking a match, he struck a flame on his trousers. The young woman watched him in dismay.

"Ye ain't goin' to smoke here?" she exclaimed, scandalized.

He laughed derisively.

"Rats! Why not? Plumbers smoke anywhere—they have to—their trade's so rotten." After a few puffs in silence, he went on: "Ye're a nice little Sunday-school artist, ain't ye? If ye didn't have that Dutch fool hangin' round, I'd take ye to Chicago—show ye how to make money like a real lady." Suddenly plunging his hand into his pocket, he drew out a small package and weighed it in his

hand. "That looks good to you?" he asked carelessly.

"What is it?" she asked, with a woman's natural curiosity.

"The gate receipts to a Marvin safe."

"Money?" she gasped.

"The third event I've pulled off'n three days."

"Steve!" she exclaimed breathlessly.

"That's goin' some, ain't it?" he grinned. "But now the cops has got me number. That slick cop Rafferty's got me goat. I guess he's wise to me. To-night I beat it West."

She said nothing for a moment, but only stared at him. Then, as if a sudden thought had come to her, she said:

"Steve, if ye're goin' away to-night, hadn't ye better give me my share now?"

He looked at her as if he doubted her sanity. Removing the cigarette from his mouth and blowing rings up to the ceiling, he exclaimed:

"Yer share o' what?"

"Out o' what ye get here"—she said timidly—"just in case anythin' goes wrong."

Turning on his heel with a muttered oath, he said menacingly:

"If anything goes wrong, I'll crucify ye and boil ye in oil." Stopping to listen at the door leading

to the landing, he added impatiently: "What's ailin' that guy? If he don't ring that bell pretty soon, the real plumber'll beat us to it!"

He went toward the door, as if about to descend the stairs. She watched him for a moment in anxious silence. Then suddenly bounding forward, she intercepted him. Confronting him, she said earnestly:

"Steve, ye ain't goin' to try any monkey business—ye mean to be square with me?"

The youth gave a grunt of disdain.

"Aw, fergit it!" exclaimed.

Warningly she went on:

"Because, if ye don't, Steve——"

Suddenly he stopped and listened. With a warning gesture, he exclaimed:

"Hush! Some one's comin'!"

Stepping to the servants' door, he listened again. Then, quickly retreating in the direction of the opposite room, he whispered: "Somebody's coming up that way." Significantly he added: "Ye'll keep 'em in here if ye know what's good fer ye!"

Frightened out of her wits, she stood irresolute, at a loss for a moment to know what to do. Who could it be coming up the servants' stairs? Miss Alice was out. The maid and Mrs. Burke-Smith were downstairs. Steve disappeared into the bath-

room, while Maggie, breathless from suppressed excitement, stood as one transfixed watching the servants' door. Presently she heard heavy footsteps on the wooden stairway just outside, and a moment later the door opened and, to her amazement, Heinie appeared.

The young wife's face turned a deathly white. For a moment she was so shocked that she almost swooned. What was the reason of this sudden visit at this time of day from her husband? He sometimes waited for her outside when the day's work was done, and they went home together, but this was the first time he had ever entered the house. Could he have guessed the real reason of her presence in Mrs. Burke-Smith's home? Had he watched Steve come into the house and waited until he could catch him at work? Had he found out that his wife, to whom he had devoted his life, was the associate and accomplice of a common thief? The beads of perspiration stood out on her clammy forehead as she gasped:

"Oh!—it's you!"

Schultz advanced into the room, a frank, open smile on his face. As he did so, the sound of hammering began in the next room.

"Hello, honey!" he said, in affectionate greeting.

"Why—why, what ye here so early fer?" she

asked nervously. "It's only three o'clock—what ye doin' up here?"

"I told 'em downstairs I wanted to see ye, and they said to come up."

"What's wrong?" she demanded.

"Why, nothin'!"

"Then what ye comin' up here now fer? Ye know I ain't through 'till five."

Cheerfully he replied:

"I got some good news fer ye."

Relieved that it was no worse, but irritated that he should have frightened her, she said crossly:

"It'll keep, Heinie. Tell me when ye come to fetch me home. Now go, won't ye?—they might not like you to be here!"

Looking at her in surprise, he said, in a tone of disappointment:

"Ye don't seem anxious to hear me news!"

"Yes, I am," she said quickly; "but the ole woman's been cross all day—if she finds ye here——"

"Oh, that's all right," he laughed. "I ain't afraid o' her!"

"No, it ain't that," she went on nervously. "She'd as lief fire me as not when she's this way."

He laughed derisively as he replied:

"Well, ye're goin' to trot right downstairs an'

tell the ole woman ye don't want the job any longer."

"What d'ye mean?" she demanded, looking at him in amazement.

"The strike's called off," he answered carelessly; "I start work to-morrow."

As he spoke there was a loud ring of the front door bell. Startled, Maggie made an involuntary exclamation of alarm. Who was that? No doubt it was the real plumber. On the verge of nervous collapse, distracted by the fear that her husband would catch sight of Steve, and that the coming of the genuine workman would bring about a crisis, the young woman felt herself grow dizzy and faint. And now, as the last crushing blow—this news that her crime was unnecessary after all, that she had ruined herself and those dear to her uselessly, senselessly! Hurt that she did not appear more pleased, Schultz said:

"Ye don't seem tickled to hear it?"

Trembling like an aspen leaf, she stammered:

"Yes, I am, Heinie."

"What's frightenin' ye?" he demanded.

"I'm scared she'll come up here an' raise a row. Won't ye go?"

Putting his arms affectionately around her, he replied:

"Yer fidgety and nervous and tired out! Now go on down an' tell the lady ye're goin' to quit, an' we'll go fer a little outin'. It'll do ye good."

With face averted, she shook her head. In a low tone she said:

"No, Heinie, I can't quit now."

"Why not?" he demanded, in surprise. "Ye don't suppose I'm goin' to let ye stay here now that I'm workin', do ye? Chase down now an' tell her."

Hearing the hammering in the other room, he stopped and listened.

"Who's that hammerin'?" he demanded.

He started toward the bathroom as if about to investigate for himself, but before he could reach the door Maggie, in a frenzy of fear, flung herself in his path. Almost in a scream she cried:—

"Don't go in there, Heinie! A workman's fixin' the basin." Trying to distract his attention, she went on hurriedly: "Tell me, how'd the strike get called off?"

But his curiosity was aroused. The workman might be a pal of his.

"Where's he from?" he asked carelessly.

"O'Keefe's, I think," she said hurriedly. "Tell me, Heinie, tell me how the strike was settled?"

"I know some of the boys down at O'Keefe's," he persisted. "I wonder——"

Again he turned toward the door. Barring the door, she said frantically:

"Did they give ye what ye asked fer, Heinie?"

But he was determined to see.

"Wait," he said; "let's see who this guy is."

Raising her voice in the hope that Steve might hear and act accordingly, and still barring the way, the young woman exclaimed warningly:

"Don't ye dare go in that room, Heinie!"

Surprised, not comprehending, he stood still and stared at her.

"Huh!" he exclaimed.

The sound of hammering ceased, and Maggie went on hastily:

"Supposin' Mrs. Burke-Smith comes up here an' finds ye goin' through the rooms? Do ye want to git into trouble?"

Pushing her aside with a laugh, he said:

"I guess I can take a look."

Opening the door, he thrust his head in.

"Heinie!" she screamed in terror.

Withdrawing his head, and closing the door, he came back to where she was standing. Calmly he said:

"Well, he ain't there anyhow; he's gone!"

With a deep sigh of relief, she gasped:

"Now, will ye please go?"

"You come, too," he said. "Chase downstairs an' tell her ye're quittin'."

She shook her head as she replied evasively:

"Ye know I can't quit all of a sudden—in the middle of the afternoon."

"Yes, ye can," he persisted.

"What'll she think if I do a thing like that?"

"Think! What do *you* care?"

"I do care a lot."

"Ain't ye got that out of yer system yet? I thought ye had some kind of pride about ye!"

She shook her head. Bitterly she replied:

"We're poor people—down an' out, an' while we are, we ought to act like people down an' out, an' when help's offered us."

Sullenly he answered:

"Forget how we pays fer it ourselves—livin' in their dog-kennels!"

She made no answer. Then shaking her head, she said bitterly:

"I never ferget it fer a minute, Heinie—I——"

Suddenly she was interrupted by another loud ring at the front door downstairs. The words died away on her lips. Every second her husband stayed there was fraught with the greatest danger. Her eyes dilated with fear, her voice trembling with

suppressed agitation, she put her hand on his arm and pushed him toward the servants' stairway.

"Now go, won't you—I hear Mrs. Burke-Smith coming!"

"All right," he said, good-naturedly. Stooping down, he said: "Give us a kiss."

Passively she put up her face.

"Here!"

He kissed her and went toward the staircase. Before he reached the door, he turned round. Sulferly he said:

"I don't see why ye don't come along with me now."

Downstairs the shrill voice of Mrs. Burke-Smith was heard calling:

"Marie! Marie!"

"What's she shoutin' about?" asked Schultz, with a laugh.

"It's the ole woman!" gasped Maggie, frantically pushing him toward the door. "She's in a temper again. She mustn't find ye here! Now go, fer God's sake, get out! Don't come back fer me. I'll go home alone."

Drawing her fondly to him for another parting kiss, Schultz opened the door and went out. Quickly she slammed the door to and dropped, almost fainting, on to a chair.

CHAPTER XIII

FOR a few moments after her husband had disappeared the young woman stood still, gasping for breath. The nervous strain she had been under during the entire time of her husband's visit was terrific. The constant dread that he would discover Steve's presence in the house had kept her in a constant agony of fear and suspense. If he had seen the youth he would have killed him—her as well, perhaps. It would be as well if he had. She did not want to live. She was better dead, after having brought disgrace on herself, on her husband, on her child. She could not stand much more of it.

Going to the top of the stairs, she listened. There were a number of persons talking. The sound of voices downstairs seemed to be nearer. Somebody was coming up. What had happened? What was Steve doing? What had he done? She did not dare ask herself. The cold sweat burst out from every pore in her body. Suppose he had been

caught at work and in self-defense had drawn a knife and—oh, it was too horrible! She did not mean to do this thing, she had been drawn into it in spite of herself. What could she do, what could she do? She felt sick and faint, the whole room seemed to spin round. Yet she must do something. Suddenly, as she stood there listening, some one dashed up the stairs, pale and breathless. It was Steve, pale and excited. Coming into the room, and dragging her with him, he quickly shut and locked the door.

"It's the real plumber!" he gasped. "Damned if I see how he got here so soon!" Pointing to the servants' stairway, he asked quickly: "The way clear?"

"Heinie's just goin' down," she whispered; "wait or ye'll meet him"

"I'll take a chance on that," he answered gruffly.

Afraid to look at him, and holding out her hand, with averted face she exclaimed:

"Gimme my share then quick——"

"Yer what?" he said sneeringly.

"Mine, what *I* git——"

With a brutal laugh, he answered:

"Ye're lucky yer don't git a beatin'!"

Desperate, ready to do anything rather than be cheated of what was rightfully hers after having

incurred such risks, she flung herself between him and the door. Savagely she said:

"No tricks now, what ye mean?"

Wrathfully he exclaimed:

"Ye put me in right—ye did—ye said the top drawer on the right——"

"Yes—that's all right——"

"Well, nothin' doin'!"

"It's a lie," she retorted, "I saw 'er put 'em there!"

Holding out a few trinkets, he said:

"Well, look what I got—scrapin' the room, runnin' a chance o' thirty years fer that junk—damn ye!"

"Gimme my share!" she insisted sullenly.

"I'll give ye a bat in the eye!" he retorted, turning to go.

Quickly she rushed to the door of the stairway, and took the key from the lock.

"Ye don't get away till ye do," she gasped.

Seizing hold of her, he grabbed her wrist and twisted it.

"Aw, drop it!" he said threateningly.

"Not till ye give me my share," she said obstinately. "I'll holler!"

Quickly he clapped his free hand over her mouth.

"Will ye? Drop it now!"

He twisted her arm until, unable to stand the pain any longer, she dropped the key. Picking it up, he ran to the door, while she stood sniveling with rage and pain. He was about to insert the key in the keyhole when some one on the other side turned the knob and knocked.

"Hell!" exclaimed the crook, starting back in alarm.

From the other side of the door was heard the shrill, petulant voice of the French maid calling out:

"Maggie, open ze door—it is locked."

The stevedore's wife gave a low exclamation of triumph. In a whisper she said:

"Now ye dirty cheat, I got ye—I got ye——"
The youth gave a quick glance about the room, and stepped over to the curtains of the bay window. Tauntingly she went on: "I got ye, haven't I? I got ye. Gimme mine now, or I'll give ye up!"

He turned on her savagely, his fist upraised. Threateningly he said:

"If ye know what's good fer ye——"

Desperate, reckless of the consequences, she repeated boldly:

"Gimme mine or I'll give ye up!"

Menacingly, he hissed between his teeth:

"Ye'd better git me out o' this——"

Laughing derisively, she exclaimed contemptuously:

"Ye cheat, I got ye!"

"If I go up the river——" he whispered.

"I'll send ye," she said frankly.

"*You'll* come, too!" he chuckled savagely.

Suddenly the voice of Mrs. Burke-Smith was heard downstairs calling impatiently:

"Marie, where are you?"

The knocking on the servants' door became more and more violent, as Marie, on the outside, made frantic efforts to get in. Angrily she cried:

"Maggie, Maggie—what's ze matter?—open ze door!"

The young woman turned to Steve. In a whisper she said:

"Fer the last time—will ye gimme mine?"

"Fergit it!" he retorted savagely.

"I can help ye git away——" she said persuasively.

"Ye'll do it anyway."

"I'll tell 'em who ye are!" she went on threateningly.

"*We* are, ye mean!" He laughed defiantly.

She shook her head, as she said:

"They ain't got nothin' on me!"

"No, but *I* have," he replied significantly, taking from his pocket the note which she had slipped under his pillow.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, recoiling.

"You'll behave now, I guess," he laughed.

Pointing to the window curtains, she exclaimed quickly:

"Hide, quick!"

"Ye poor little boob!" he laughed.

He stepped hastily behind the curtain of the bay window. Maggie adjusted the folds so that he could not be seen, then, quickly going to the servants' entrance, she unlocked the door. The French maid, beside herself with rage, bounced in, fuming with anger.

"What you mean locking me out?" she exclaimed indignantly. "Don't you hear Madame call?"

"Gi' me time, can't ye?" replied Maggie doggedly.

The maid did not deign to answer, but, going to the landing, called down the staircase:

"Here I am, Madame!"

But her mistress, made impatient by the delay, had herself come upstairs to investigate. Somewhat out of breath from the climb, she demanded sharply:

"Marie, where is that plumber who came to fix

the basin? There is another man downstairs who says he came from the same shop."

The maid went at once into the bathroom. A moment later they heard an exclamation of surprise. With a look of blank astonishment on her face, she reappeared and said:

"He is not there, Madame! He is gone!"

"Gone?" exclaimed her mistress incredulously, and advancing further into the room. Breathlessly the maid went on:

"An' he has not fixed ze basin at all!"

Perplexed, Mrs. Burke-Smith stood and stared at the two women. All at once an alarming thought occurred to her. Anxiously she exclaimed:

"Great Heavens! Did you see him, Maggie? Where did he go?"

"I ain't seen him," answered the young woman sullenly. Pointing with averted eyes to the inner room, she added: "I was in that room brushin' the dog. I heard him hammerin', and then it stopped. I thought he was finished."

With an exclamation of alarm, Mrs. Burke-Smith threw up both her hands.

"I knew it! I knew it! He's an impostor. He came to rob the house!"

"Oh, Madame!" exclaimed Marie in alarm.

"Yes," continued her mistress; "he must have escaped down those back stairs."

The maid looked at her mistress in a frightened manner. Half hysterically she exclaimed:

"He is in the house, Madame!"

"Still?" ejaculated the old lady, paling under her cosmetics with fright.

Officially, the maid chattered on:

"He could not go down ze stairs. I come up. Ze door was locked. Maggie she let me in."

Realizing that she would be expected to furnish some plausible explanation, the stevedore's wife pointed to the second door of the bathroom which opened on the hall.

"Look at that door," she exclaimed; "it's open!"

"Open!" ejaculated her mistress. "It was always locked before. He must have gone out into the hall."

Mrs. Burke-Smith threw up her hands. Almost hysterically she cried:

"Then he's roaming about now on the floor below. Think of it! That awful man loose in the house!" Completely losing her head, she cried: "Oh, do something—call someone—call the police, Marie—we shall all be killed! Call Alice—run for Alice!"

The maid hurried into Alice's room, while her mistress went on excitedly:

"I don't see Bébé. Where's Bébé? Bébé! Bébé! Oh, I believe that awful man came to steal Bébé! He knows she's valuable. Maggie, where's Bébé?"

"Yer dog's all right," answered the young woman sullenly. Nodding toward the adjoining room she said, "She's in there!" Suddenly an idea came to her. The old lady's anxiety about the wretched cur might give Steve the chance he wanted to get away. Quickly she added: "That is—I suppose yer dog's all right."

Terrified even at the suggestion that anything could have happened to her pet, Mrs. Burke-Smith exclaimed anxiously:

"Bring her to me—bring her to me——"

"Sure," answered the young woman with an impudent smile as she went to the room where she had left the dog.

Mrs. Burke-Smith collapsed helpless into a chair. Weakly she exclaimed:

"Why doesn't someone think to call a policeman?"

Suddenly Marie re-entered across the hall from Alice's room. Excitedly she said:

"Mademoiselle Alice she has gone out, Madame."

"Gone out? Where?"

"Shopping, Madame."

The old lady threw up her hands.

"Of course, it's always like that! Here we are in danger of being murdered, and my niece chooses such a moment to go shopping! Really, young girls nowadays are most inconsiderate."

While the old lady was fuming Maggie re-entered, a look of dismay on her face. Instantly Mrs. Burke-Smith sensed something was wrong. The safety of her precious pet was more important just then than the whereabouts of her niece. Turning quickly to the sewing woman she demanded:

"Well—where is Bébé?"

Instead of answering the young woman pointed to the inner room. In a hard, sulky tone she said:

"Somethin' the matter wit' yer dog!"

"What's wrong?" exclaimed her mistress, jumping up.

"Better go and see," she exclaimed.

"Surely, Heaven wouldn't visit such an affliction now! Bébé, my darling Bébé——"

Mrs. Burke-Smith rushed wildly into the next room. Marie was about to follow, when suddenly she stopped and looked suspiciously at the sewing woman.

"I wonder what make Bébé sick, eh?"

"Go to the devil!" said Maggie viciously.

With a defiant shrug of her shoulders the French maid left the room. Maggie shut the door after them, locked it, then stepped hurriedly to the curtain and pulled it open. Steve cautiously emerged.

"Well, ye *have* got some sense, ain't ye?"

He went quickly toward the servants' door, but the young woman intercepted him.

"None o' that now!" he said threateningly.

"Steve, won't ye divvy?" she said piteously.

"Cut it!"

"I been square with you—ain't I, Steve?" she said, starting to cry.

"Stop yer sniveling!"

"Yer know what I need it for— Gi' me just enough to raise a hundred. When I get to Wyoming I'll work and pay it back—I swear I will!"

"Oh, dry that shower!"

"Oh, Steve, I been waitin'—dreamin'—sufferin' to get this money! It means everything in the world. Steve, if you only could know what a great thing it means——"

Pointing to Alice's room, he said significantly:

"Here, I'll tip ye off. There's a diamond brooch

in there in the top drawer of the bureau. I heard the gal say so. Cop it; I ain't got time——"

Recoiling in horror she exclaimed in great distress:

"I can't take that!"

He looked at her in surprise.

"Ye can't?"

She shook her head. Almost sobbing, she said.

"Miss Alice's the only friend I got——"

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently. Cynically he replied:

"Ain't I yer friend? An' ye want to bleed *me*? Swipe it from her and ye can pay *her* back."

"Please, Steve, please——" she cried appealingly.

Putting his hand over her face, he pushed her away from the door. Laughing good-naturedly he said:

"Oh, to hell with you! So long!"

He opened the door and, slamming it in her face, disappeared, leaving her panting with rage and disappointment. Gritting her teeth and swallowing back the sobs that choked her she exclaimed:

"Ye low-down devil, you!"

For a moment she stood still, undecided what to do. It was for this, then, that she had made herself the associate and accomplice of a criminal, and

consented to the robbing of the house of a woman who had befriended her. She had committed the crime, sold her soul and peace of mind and she had nothing to show for it! She had been herself robbed of the reward, the blood money. What could she do? The hundred dollars and Wyoming were as far away as ever. Suddenly she gave a gasp. An idea had occurred to her. Steve had mentioned the brooch. But that was Miss Alice's! How could she rob the only being in the world who had been kind to her? Yet she must, she must! She was already a thief, she might as well earn the name as the blame. Her face hardening with resolution, she turned quickly and disappeared into her young mistress's room. Almost immediately she returned, carefully pinning something inside her shirtwaist. Listening cautiously at the top of the landing for a moment, she tore off her apron, rolled it in a bundle and commenced putting on her hat and jacket. While she was thus engaged Marie entered from the next room.

"Where you go?" demanded the maid, eyeing her suspiciously.

"Home!" replied Maggie laconically.

The maid opened wide her eyes.

"What for you go home now?" she demanded in haughty surprise.

"I'm tired."

"It is vairy earlie——"

"I said I'm tired," repeated Maggie, raising her voice angrily.

There was something in the young woman's manner that excited the maid's suspicion. If only she could detain her a minute she would warn her mistress.

"Oh, wait a mineete," she said, "perhape Madame would speak to you——"

"She say so?" demanded Maggie.

"No," said the maid evasively; "but perhaps in a mineete she weel—jest wait——"

Shrugging her shoulders, the stevedore's wife went on with her preparations for departure.

"I ain't takin' no orders from you," she said defiantly.

Looking at her searchingly, the maid went on:

"Madame is weeping for poor Bébé—she is dead!"

"Ain't it a shame?" exclaimed Maggie mockingly.

Angrily the French woman said:

"Madame shall soon find out—she send for the vetrenaire—I don't think Bébé was sick——"

"No?"

"No; I think she was strangled."

“Poor Bébél!”

With an exclamation of mock sympathy, the stevedore’s wife struck down the maid’s arm, raised to detain her, and with an insolent look of defiance went out through the servants’ door, with her apron under her arm.

CHAPTER XIV

RAFFERTY was one of those policemen, born with a natural genius for thief-catching, who, once they go out on a case, never tire of the man-chase until they corner their quarry. No ruse, however ingeniously planned, could throw him off the scent. Like all detectives who have risen high in the business, he took a keen pride in his extraordinary record for the arrest of dangerous criminals, and this partly explained why he neglected no detail, no matter how trivial or unimportant it might appear to be, which promised to furnish a clue and lead to ultimate results.

His first step on hearing of the robbery at Mrs. Burke-Smith's house was to proceed to West 72d Street and learn all the particulars possible from the lips of the irate dame herself. Mrs. Burke-Smith imparted to him her suspicions, told him about the basin being broken, the sending for a plumber and the coming in a few minutes of a man who represented himself as a bona-fide workman.

When the real plumber arrived, a few minutes later, they, of course, suspected that something was wrong, and a quick investigation showed that the house had been robbed of silver plate and sundry jewels belonging to Mrs. Burke-Smith. The bogus plumber had disappeared, and, strangely enough, a young woman, engaged to do some sewing, had left the house suddenly and did not return. On the face of it all seemed plain enough. The bogus plumber was the thief and the sewing girl his accomplice. Could anything be simpler? Both Mrs. Burke-Smith and her niece were loath to believe that the young person working for them, Maggie Schultz, the stevedore's wife, was dishonest, although her sudden disappearance certainly looked suspicious. With this information Rafferty began his hunt.

The girl was easy. She could be found when he wanted her. The first question was the identity of the "plumber." Rafferty was nothing if not a quick diagnostician. The girl lived in the same house as Stevey Bates. Steve had been idle, and up to mischief for some time. What more likely than it was he who had turned the trick? There was no need to make immediate arrests. Nothing would be gained by frightening them. The better plan was to just watch both, and then there might be a chance

of recovering some of the things stolen. He would call on some of the pawnshops in Poverty Hollow and find out if there had been any transactions lately in the line of family silver, and while in the neighborhood it would not harm to drop in to see friend Schultz, if only to hear how things were looking since the recent strike.

About two o'clock one afternoon, the day after the robbery, Rafferty sauntered carelessly through the back purlieus of the Hollow and, slipping unobserved into the dark narrow hallway of the Smith tenements, proceeded leisurely up the rickety staircase to the Schultz apartment. Arrived at the fourth floor, the detective stopped and for a moment listened intently. Hearing no sound within he knocked and waited for a reply. None came. He turned the handle, but it did not yield. The door was locked. Schultz was still at work and his wife probably away on some domestic errand. For a moment the officer stood there cogitating. This was just the opportunity he had wanted. The stolen things were probably concealed on the premises. It was important that he make a search. But how could he get in? Ah—yes—he had not thought of that—the rear fire escape! Retracing his steps, he went down the stairs to the street.

He had hardly disappeared when a second visitor

staggered in from the street and stamped his way noisily upstairs. It was Steve, slightly under the influence of liquor and chewing an immense cigar, which was unlighted. When he reached the fourth floor the young man stopped and listened a moment and, hearing no voices, was about to continue on up to his own rooms, when suddenly an idea seemed to occur to him. He stopped suddenly and tried the handle of the Schultz apartment. Finding it locked, he quickly put his hand in his pocket and drew out a skeleton key. Inserting it in the lock he turned it and entered.

Long before this the youth had intended skipping out of town. Having already disposed of the best part of the proceeds of the robbery, he was all ready to go, but afraid that a too sudden departure might direct suspicion to him he had thought it wiser to tarry a while. He knew well enough by this time that Rafferty was on the job, and if he could direct suspicion to some one else, he would have just so much better a chance of making a clean get-away. There was still some of the silver undisposed of. Marked, as it was, with a monogram, he did not care to risk pawning it, and there was no time to melt it down. If he could plant it somewhere where it could be discovered, the party where it was found would be

pinched and not he. A sudden plan occurred to him. He had not forgotten that he owed Heinie Schultz a grudge. Why not get even? The fellow was known to be hard up, owing right and left, on account of the strike. His wife had been employed by the Burke-Smiths. What more probable than that they were the thieves? He could plant some of the silver in the Schultz flat. It would be a cinch.

Entering the room boldly, he glanced quickly around. On the lighted stove the kettle was humming peacefully, showing that Maggie could not be far away. His eyes fell on the cradle in the corner. Why not there? That would be as good a hiding place as any. Yet still he hesitated. It would be tough on Maggie. It wasn't so much the wife that he was sore against as the husband. Perhaps there was a better place in the bedroom. Opening the door of the inner room he went in.

Just as he disappeared, the window at the back was suddenly darkened by the shadow of a man, who had come up by the fire escape. Peering in the window, Rafferty opened it cautiously and stepped lightly into the room. Crossing it stealthily, he opened wide the door, which Steve had left ajar, went out on the landing, threw a hurried look up and down the stairs and came back into the room.

Suddenly the door of the bedroom opened. The youth was returning. Quickly the sleuth stepped behind the door and concealed himself. Steve entered whistling carelessly, and, taking out his skeleton key, made for the landing, prepared to re-lock the door behind him. As he pulled the door to, Rafferty stepped out and stood quietly confronting him. The youth made a muffled ejaculation of astonishment, but, instantly recovering himself, he exclaimed with forced jocularity:

"Well! Well! See who's here!"

The detective smiled sardonically.

"Surprised?" he asked airily.

The youth grinned as he mumbled awkwardly:

"Thought me mother was here!" Avoiding Rafferty's keen gaze he said defiantly:

"What ye doin' here?"

The officer shrugged his shoulders. Coolly he replied:

"Oh—just blew in to see me friend Schultz."

The youth eyed him warily, as if trying to read in the policeman's sphynx-like face the real reason of his visit. Had he really come to see Schultz or was he after him? Was the game up? Boldly, he said:

"Friend o' your'n, eh?"

The detective smiled grimly.

"Sure—what else do you suppose I'd come up here for?" Giving him a sharp look, he added quickly: "Any idea?"

The crook stared stolidly at him for a few moments, as if thinking what cue to take. Then quickly throwing off all hostility, he went on, with an insolent smile:

"Sure, I know."

"What for?" demanded the officer, watching him closely and prepared for any emergency.

The crook grinned.

"Ye come all the way upstairs jest to gimme a light. Ye're a nice little feller."

Rafferty shrugged his shoulders good-humoredly and, with a smile, lighted a match, which he held to the youth's cigar. As he got a whiff of the smoke he exclaimed incredulously:

"What's this—Africanos?"

The youth chuckled as he replied:

"Twenty-five straight!" Taking a cigar from his pocket, he handed it to the officer. "Have one?"

Rafferty took the weed and for a moment stood studying it critically. Then looking up at the donor, he said significantly:

"Ain't we livin' pretty high nowadays?"

"I ain't afraid to spend money," replied the youth boldly.

The detective smiled.

"Sure!" he said drily. "Ye ain't afraid to spend money. Come easy; go easy, huh?"

"You got the idea—almost," nodded Steve carelessly.

Dropping into a chair by the table, the young man spread out his legs comfortably and sat puffing at his cigar in silence. The detective took a seat opposite and, while he smoked quietly, surveyed the young man thoughtfully. With affected indifference he asked presently:

"Ye ain't been workin' down to the dance hall lately."

The youth looked up quickly.

"Who said I ain't?" he snapped.

"I didn't see ye there Wednesday," said the sleuth.

The crook looked up suspiciously. What did he mean? Was it a trap? Quickly he said:

"What kind of a con is that? Ye wasn't there Wednesday."

The detective nodded.

"I know I wasn't," he went on calmly. "I was on the corner of West 72d Street." Watching his *vis-à-vis* closely out of the corner of his eye, to see the effect, he added quickly: "About three o'clock!"

The youth gave an involuntary start. For a moment he lost his self-possession and stopped his cigar half way to his lips, but quickly recovering himself he retorted:

"That so? Well, don't feel bad. Nobody saw ye."

The officer smiled grimly.

"Guess that's why nobody saw me cross the Park an hour later."

Leaning across the table, he peered through the thick clouds of tobacco smoke to see how the crook took it. The young man winced perceptibly, but, not to be outdone, he retorted imperturbably:

"Maybe." Then, leaning over the table in the direction of his antagonist, he leered: "And maybe that's why ye didn't see me sittin' in the Rat at five-thirty. That seems to be worryin' ye."

Rafferty smiled.

"Oh, I saw you all right!" After a few puffs at his cigar he went on: "Say, what the hell does a feller that can't hit a spot ball stand around a pool table for two hours fer? That was the rankest play to git noticed I ever looked at."

"So!" exclaimed the youth. "I *was* noticed at five-thirty, was I? Don't ye know I never git up before three in the afternoon? Takes me a couple of hours to git dressed, git breakfast and git up to

me job. So now nursie knows just where little baby was all the time."

The sleuth smiled knowingly as he went on:

"But yesterday baby couldn't sleep and got up at noon. It worries nursie."

Quickly the youth sat up with a start.

"Oh!—ye was takin' that much notice—was ye?" he exclaimed. "Well, now I'm goin' to tell ye somethin' to make ye feel bad. Some of you wise guys thought Haggerty was playin' the New Orleans ponies in the back of his saloon, and ye had a nice little raid all framed up yesterday for one o'clock—didn't ye?"

The detective nodded.

"I heard about it," he said.

"Well, them smart Alecs come rushing back through the bar, an' there was two doors; sure enough, the boobs goes in the wrong door."

"An' somebody turned the key on 'em!" said Rafferty laughing.

The crook grinned. With a wink of confidence he went on:

"Neat, huh? Well, that guy with the key was baby."

Sitting back in his chair the officer laughed boisterously, as if he enjoyed the joke hugely.

"Bully for you!" he cried. With a chuckle he went on:

"I heard there was a ripe guy in there with whiskers from Indiana."

The crook pulled a grimace. More soberly he replied:

"Hear about him? After the place got pinched I couldn't lose him. He wanted to hand me his roll, 'fraid they would take it fer evidence. Well, I lit out, and this guy slings to me all the way up Seventh Avenue, so I begins to think I kin git him up to Harlem sittin' in a nice little poker game."

"But instead you shook him in the subway crowd at two-thirty," interrupted the sleuth sharply.

"How the hell do you know?" exclaimed Steve startled.

The sleuth grinned.

"Well, that guy with the whiskers was nursie! So you see she's worryin' about where ye were for three hours till ye showed up in Harlem."

The crook gaped at him, open-mouthed. Nervously, he exclaimed:

"There's a picture puzzle fer ye! Find six saloons with Steve inside between Harlem and Houston Street!"

Rafferty rose. Carelessly he said:

"So that's the best you can give me, is it? Well, I'll try!"

He turned and went towards the door. As he reached it, Mrs. Bates appeared on the threshold, a shawl over her head and a small basket in her hand. On seeing her son, the old woman exclaimed impatiently:

"Ah, there ye are!"

Seeing the stranger, she stopped.

"Oh!" she muttered. Beckoning to her son she called out, "Steve!"

Still seated at the table, his back towards the door, the youth answered, without turning round: "Huh?"

"I'm goin' to the grocery."

"Go ahead!" he replied impudently without looking up.

"I'm needing some change," she went on.

"Can't ye see I'm busy?" growled the youth irritably.

Rafferty went towards the door. Politely he said:

"Come in, madam; I won't wait."

She hesitated and looked at him curiously. Anxiously she asked:

"Ye wantin' to see anybody?"

He shook his head as he replied evasively:

"Oh, that's all right!"

Without another word he went out, and proceeded downstairs to the street. The mother turned quickly to her son. Apprehensively she inquired:

"Who is that, Steve?"

His hands in his pockets and with an insolent shrug of his shoulders, he answered:

"Oh, that's a loose-mouthed guy named Bill Rafferty!"

Startled at the dread name of the famous thug-taker, his mother looked anxiously at her son. Fearfully, she exclaimed:

"Rafferty! He's a plain-clothes cop, ain't he?"

"He's a bum imitation of one," he rejoined angrily.

Alarmed, she asked quickly:

"What's he doin' here?"

The youth rose and paced the floor nervously. Gruffly he replied:

"Come in to see Dutch!"

She looked at him doubtfully.

"What's a plain-clothes man botherin' Dutch about?"

"Well, how do I know? That's his business."

"Ye're sure it ain't you he's after?"

The youth shrugged his shoulders impatiently, as he replied sarcastically:

"Sure—by appointment. Here in Dutch's place!"

"Ye seemed talkin' awful serious about some-thin'," persisted his mother.

The youth made no answer, but continued to nervously pace the floor.

His mother watched him anxiously. She knew well enough that something was amiss.

"What's the matter, Steve? I can see by yer manner ye're scared."

Angrily he turned on her:

"Quit yer gassin', can't ye! Ye're enough to make any one crazy with yer questionin'!"

She raised her hand warningly. Severely she exclaimed:

"You've bin doin' something."

Looking around nervously he whispered:

"I tell ye nobody's got nothin' on me. Now shut up!" Listening a moment he said: "Somebody's comin'."

As he spoke there was a knock on the door. Dr. Taylor put his head in.

"Good mornin', doctor!" called out the Irish-woman.

"Good morning, Mrs. Bates!" he replied cheerily as he warmed his hands at the stove. "Saw you had a fire in here. Don't mind if I warm my fingers, do you?"

"Are ye on the way to see the sick child, doctor?"

The physician nodded, as he replied:

"How is he this morning?"

The Irishwoman smiled knowingly. With a wink she answered.

"He's always better when your friend, Miss Alice, is lookin' after him."

The young man's face broadened into a smile.

"That's so. This is her day down here, isn't it?"

Mrs. Bates chuckled. Dryly she retorted:

"Maybe that's why ye come two hours earlier than usual!"

Steve, who had been sitting on the table with his back to the newcomer, turned round, and the physician, who had been laughing at the Irishwoman's remark, gave him a curt nod.

"How are you?"

The youth answered with a surly grunt and, rising from the table, left the room without a word. When he had gone his mother gave a deep sigh. Not slow to notice that something was wrong, the physician turned round:

"Anything the matter?" he asked sympathetically.

Mrs. Bates looked away. Tearfully she answered:

"Was there iver a toime when there wasn't somethin' wrong?"

Seeing the subject was distasteful, he changed the topic. Poking the fire, he asked:

"How's Maggie? Getting on all right at Burke-Smith's?"

"Why, not so good, I guess," replied the Irishwoman evasively. "She had to quit there yesterday."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the physician surprised. "What's the trouble?"

"Faith," she went on indignantly, "she's worked to death! I never saw a swell job yet that there wasn't a bug in it." Noticing how savagely the doctor was poking the coal, she protested: "Oh, doctor dear—be gentle with that coal!"

"Eh?" he exclaimed, desisting.

"Ye know ye can't jab at that in the free and easy way ye jab yer patients. We'd like to have it last longer!"

He laughed heartily, and in the midst of the merriment the door opened and Alice entered. She colored with pleasure when she saw who was there.

"Oh! you are here already, are you?" she exclaimed, shaking hands.

The Irishwoman threw up her hands in mock astonishment.

"Such a world of surprises!" she exclaimed.

The physician laughed good naturedly.

"Thought I had better get down before you had my patient altogether cured. How is the kid?"

"It's asleep now. You mustn't go in yet awhile. You are not in a hurry, are you?"

Answering for the doctor, Mrs. Bates replied quickly:

"Oh, not a little bit!" Picking up her basket she went on: "But I will be goin' about me errands." Nudging the doctor she said: "Shure, if the baby will help ye out by goin' to sleep it's up to me to help ye out too. I'll see ye later!"

Nodding another farewell, she went out.

CHAPTER XV

WHEN the Irishwoman had closed the door the physician turned to his fiancée. Good naturedly he said :

"Nice, cheery old party, isn't she? This would be a sad place with her off the premises—except on Thursdays," he added with a significant smile.

"You'd better add that," laughed the young girl coquettishly. Quickly she asked: "How did you happen to drop in here? I expected to meet you downstairs."

"The door was open and I came in on a chance of finding you. Why did you come in?"

Her face grew suddenly serious as she replied :

"I wanted to see Maggie—at once, on very urgent business."

Looking at her questioningly, he asked :

"How are things at the house now? Have they quieted down since yesterday?"

The girl shook her head.

"No—not a bit. Auntie is still very excited and

angry. When I left she was closeted with another man from Police Headquarters." Looking away absent-mindedly she added: "I do wish she would let the matter drop."

The doctor pondered for a minute. Then thoughtfully he said:

"Home breaking is pretty serious business. It must have given Mrs. Burke-Smith quite a fright."

The girl nodded.

"Poor Auntie! I was out making calls when it happened. When I got home I found her quite hysterical. Still I am sorry she is making so much of it."

The young man looked grave. Slowly he said:

"No wonder! Having a yeggman prowling about the house picking up jewelry is a pretty serious business. Did he get much?"

The girl shook her head. Deprecatingly she said:

"The man was frightened away before it really became serious. Why, Auntie would never have missed the things if she did not know the house had been robbed."

The physician looked at her curiously.

"Aren't you making rather light of it?" he asked.

The young girl was silent. She could not be entirely frank—not even with the man she loved. She

did not like to suspect Maggie, but her behavior was certainly extraordinary. She had not been to the house since. She had not even told her aunt that she missed her diamond brooch. It was hard to believe that the girl was a thief, yet she could not help recalling several little incidents—the taking of the silver mug, the fumbling of the brooch which fell on the floor and broke. Maggie alone knew where the brooch had been put, and it was gone! If her aunt knew that, she would have had her arrested at once. She felt so sorry for the young woman. There were many sterling qualities in her which she recognized and admired. If she had succumbed to temptation, then it must have been owing to something which she was powerless to resist. That was why she had come there now—with the hope of seeing Maggie and getting some explanation from her. Perhaps matters could still be satisfactorily explained.

“Aren’t you making rather light of it?” he repeated.

She shook her head as she replied seriously:

“I’m trying to—I want it dropped——”

He stared at her in amazement.

“You want it dropped!” Protestingly he went on: “It’s your good heart talking now. But that won’t do. Come now, you can’t be over-mag-

nanimous with the criminal classes. That's overdoing our humanitarian purpose just a little—don't you think so?"

The girl shook her head.

"I don't mean to do that, but I know if this matter is pushed any farther the punishment will fall on innocent shoulders."

He looked up in surprise.

"Whose?"

"Maggie's!"

The young man gave a low expressive whistle of astonishment. Alice went on hurriedly:

"She left us hurriedly yesterday, just about the time this thing happened. Naturally every one instantly concluded that she had a hand in it!"

"French leave, eh?"

"You know Maggie," she went on. "She's a strange girl. She wasn't happy at Auntie's—her husband opposed her working there. It wasn't surprising to have her leave without saying anything, especially as she had received her wages that morning—it's just an unfortunate coincidence."

"Just the same it looks black for Maggie!" said the doctor sceptically.

Looking at her fiancé reproachfully, the young girl exclaimed:

"How can you say that?"

"Well, see the way the thing was worked out—a wash basin is broken in your aunt's house. Somebody telephones for the plumber. Pretty soon a chap comes in, says he is the plumber, robs the house, and makes his escape just as the real plumber arrives. That couldn't possibly be done without an inside confederate. Who broke the wash basin?"

"Maggie!" she replied reluctantly.

"There you are!" he exclaimed triumphantly.

The girl turned and faced him, her eyes flashing. Firmly she exclaimed:

"That girl is innocent!"

"I'd like to believe it," he sighed, with an incredulous shrug of his shoulders.

"You must—facts or no facts—you must!"

He looked at her admiringly.

"What a staunch friend you are! By Jove, it's worth being in trouble just to have you stand by one!"

"Is it?" she smiled. "Then you stand by me, and we will stand by Maggie together."

"Agreed!" he exclaimed, grasping her two hands.

Earnestly she went on:

"And don't think it is a blind, girlish sentiment on my part. I know it's the right thing to do, because whatever the real facts are—at heart Maggie is good. She may have had some battle to fight,

some problem to face that was too big for her, but she's done her level best to do right—I know that."

He nodded sympathetically. Heartily he exclaimed:

"Then we'll pull her through. Let's put it up to Mrs. Burke-Smith that way. Perhaps she'll drop the whole thing."

Alice shook her head.

"I am afraid not," she said. "I have talked with her. She is not vindictive, but her ideas of right and wrong and justice are—well, a bit cut and dried. I suppose we would call her old-fashioned."

With an appreciative grunt he went on:

"Does Maggie know she is under suspicion?"

"I don't think so. I haven't seen her since."

The young man looked at her musingly. Presently after a silence, during which she colored under his steady gaze, he exclaimed with enthusiasm:

"Billie, you are a big, big woman!"

She smiled as she replied in a low tone:

"You haven't called me 'Billie' since we were kiddies."

"Funny how it slipped out— isn't it?" he laughed.

"You know I sometimes wonder——"

"Wonder what?" she demanded, poking the fire.

Absent-mindedly he went on:

"I have floated around here as a kind of model

chap with a high-sounding humanitarian object——”

Stirring the fire vigorously, she laughed and said:

“I hope you have.”

“Here, now, easy with that coal!” he exclaimed.

Then, resuming, he went on pensively:

“I guess Bates about has my number. Faith, it’s a sharp eye she’s got!”

“What does she see?” demanded his companion, still busy with the fire.

“Just what *you’ve* overlooked!” he answered quickly.

“Indeed! What’s that?”

“That these humanitarian ideas that I parade around here five days in the week always get painfully synthesized—on Thursdays.”

She looked up in amused surprise.

“What’s that?” she asked.

“Oh! That’s technical for being compressed—brought together—concentrated. All my feeling for humanity seems to concentrate into one little emotional, over-charged capsule—on Thursdays!”

Laughing, she said pointedly:

“And you don’t know what on earth to do with the capsule—what a pity!”

Realizing that he was thwarted, he retorted:

“Now, if you wouldn’t mind my starting again,

why perhaps I could frame this up more intelligently."

Patting him on the arm, she said:

"I'll let you frame it up some other time."

"You mean that?" he asked earnestly.

She nodded, her face coloring. Quickly she added:

"But down here we must give all our time to these poor people. We have our own world in which to think of ourselves."

He looked at her tenderly, as he answered:

"But down here is where I found *you*—I mean the woman that you really are. Uptown I knew you just as I knew other women—no better—but when I saw you here—different, generous, sympathetic, working earnestly for a noble purpose—" He stopped, and then after a pause went on: "Surely the world and the work that showed me so much won't begrudge me this time!" Taking her hand, he added: "Come on, Billie, let's brighten up this old shack with a radiance of our own!"

She did not withdraw her hand, but just sat silent, gazing into the fire, listening to the ardent words of this man who loved her.

"Can we?" she said at length.

He nodded.

"You stand by folks in trouble, don't you?" he

said. "Well, I'm in trouble now—the worst kind—stand pat!"

Taking both his hands, she looked bravely up into his face and said:

"There—I love you!" As he stooped to kiss her she added roguishly: "But I had no idea of letting you be so irresistible in work hours."

His arm was still round her when suddenly there was a commotion at the door.

Ashamed at being caught in this unconventional attitude, Alice quickly drew away and looked up. It was little Lucy, a playmate of the child who was sick. The child stood abashed in the doorway, afraid to come in.

"What is it, dear?" demanded Alice.

"The baby's woke, Miss. He's crying' fer ye."

The physician started forward. Laughingly he said:

"Did baby mention if doctor might come along too?"

"Oh—you ain't no good!" retorted the little girl, with the insolent disregard of children of that class for their elders.

"Why not?" laughed the doctor.

"Cause ye hurted me when ye saw'd me nose out."

"Come, Ralph!" laughed Alice, going towards

the door. "We must not neglect our little patient!"

They both hurried away, leaving the door ajar. For a few moments after their departure there was a deep silence. The only sounds that disturbed the perfect stillness were the crackling of the coal in the grate and the low murmur of the kettle. Presently, however, there was a stealthy step on the landing outside, the door was pushed open, and Steve cautiously thrust his head in. Seeing that the coast was clear, he came in, carrying in his hand a small cheap-looking carpet bag. Now was the time to make the plant. He might not get another opportunity as good. If the silver were found in Schultz's room, the cops would have the goods on him. Placing the bag on the table, he opened it, took out a package it contained and went quickly into the next room. Almost immediately he returned, but without the package. The planting had been done. Snatching up the empty bag, he turned to go, but just as he reached the door, it was opened and the stevedore's wife entered.

On seeing the youth, Maggie started back in mingled surprise and alarm. She was under the impression that she had locked the door when she went out. How, then, did he get in, and what did he want? The youth seemed a trifle disconcerted at

the meeting, but, brazening it out, recovered his composure immediately.

"Jest come up stairs?" he asked carelessly.

She looked at him sullenly.

"Yes—how did ye come in? The door was locked."

"Not much," he laughed. "I found the door open. Guess ye forgot to lock it."

Suspiciously she went on:

"Well, what do ye want?"

"Dropped in to see ye, that's all!" he grinned. Carelessly he went on: "See a tall guy in a gray suit and a red mustache waitin' round anywheres?"

"I dunno," she answered absent-mindedly. Then, as if realizing the danger of the crook's presence, she added quickly: "Yes, I guess so—if Heinie catches ye in here, ye know what'll happen to ye. What ye doin' aroun' here anyhow?"

"Sort o' wonderin' how ye panned out," he replied evasively. "Lichenstein give ye what I said he oughta on the brooch?"

For a moment she was silent. Then sullenly she said:

"He gimme a hundred an' thirteen dollars!"

The youth opened his eyes as he exclaimed:

"An' you shoutin' yer head off cuz I *made* ye

take it fer yer share—ye see?—I knew what it was worth!”

“I wasn’t kickin’ about that,” she said doggedly.

“Nobody ever trusts me,” he said, with an air of injured innocence.

Angrily she interrupted him.

“I told ye Miss Alice was the one friend I got in the world—I didn’t want nothin’ stole she had.”

He grinned as he replied sarcastically:

“Nothin’ to it at all. I can break into a house, an’ rob it in six minutes, an’ play favorites while I’m doin’ it. Gee, youse women are a scream!”

“Anyhow ye might a gimme somethin’ that wasn’t hers fer my share.”

“Ye couldn’t a soaked nothin’ else an’ got away with it, ye little idiot! But I notice when it comes down to brass tacks, yer after the money all right!”

“I hadda—I hadda!” she said fiercely. “There wasn’t nothin’ else for it. It meant everything in the world to me. I hadda—that’s all!”

He shrugged his shoulders impatiently.

“Aw, quit yer snivelin’. Take it from me, if ye want to keep out of jail, ye want to sack that long face of yours. People is gettin’ to think things around here.”

Panic-stricken, she looked at him in terror.

“Steve!” she exclaimed. “What d’ye mean?”

"Soft pedal!" he whispered. "*You're* all right. I told ye I was takin' all the risk, didn't I?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am. So I'm blowin' out o' town. No-body'll notice you if ye keep yer head shut."

"Oh, Steve, if they git you——"

He shrugged his shoulders as he replied sneeringly:

"They'd git *you*, too. That's why ye're scared fer *me*, was it? Well, don't ye fret!" Shaking his fist at her, he went on angrily: "But if they git anythin' out of ye—if ye squeal—I'll fix ye good and plenty. Don't forget I got a little note ye left under me pillow!" Taking it from his pocket he added: "If I goes up the river, ye goes, too—see?"

He would have said more, only at that moment his mother appeared on the threshold, carrying a basketful of things. Putting the bundle down and gasping for breath, the Irishwoman exclaimed:

"Thank the Lord, them errands is done. Steve, every toime I come by I see ye here."

The youth grinned.

"Me and Maggie jest gassin' friendly. Ain't we, Maggie?"

Seeing the bag on the table, the Irishwoman turned to her son.

"What's me bag doin' here?"

For a moment the youth was at a loss what to answer. Then with a shrug of his shoulders he said, with a smile:

"Ye know, Mud, I was all fixed to go t' Europe, but there ain't a bunk left on the *Lusitania*, so take t' bag away!"

Opening the bag and looking into it, his mother went on:

"There's nothin' in it. What devilment are ye up to, anyhow?"

The young crook laughed loudly as he exclaimed:

"Ye bin sayin' fer so long that me next suit of pajamas would be furnished by the State, I didn't see no use in takin' any!"

His mother shook her head. Seriously she said:

"Stave, talk serious—are ye goin' away?"

"Now this is dead on the level—no joshin', I am goin' to Newport and rent meself out as a little brother of the rich!"

The Irishwoman looked at him with concern. He was her boy after all. Anxiously she said:

"Steve, if ye're in some kind of trouble and have to git out, won't ye tell me about it? Don't keep me worryin', tell me where ye're goin'."

Sullenly he answered:

"I don't know where I'm going. But don't worry. If a telegram comes collect don't accept it

—it's just a signal I'm in good health—see—so long!"

With a careless farewell gesture he went out on the landing and was about to go downstairs when suddenly a noise down below made him stop. Looking cautiously over the balustrade, he had seen Rafferty standing waiting quietly inside the front door. Recoiling quickly, he darted back into the room. For a moment he stood irresolute, breathing hard as he looked around for some way of escape. Then quickly he ran to the rear window, where the fire escape offered a convenient and discreet descent to the court below. With a grin at the two women, who watched him open-mouthed, he exclaimed:

"I'll leave by the elevator, ladies!" Throwing up the window he stepped out on the fire escape, and whispered:

"Say, there's a hopeful guy down there waitin' for some money I owe 'm. If he's waitin' there to-morrow morning chase down and feed him some breakfast."

Waving his hand to them he pulled down the window and disappeared.

Startled and nervous, Maggie turned to her neighbor:

"Why did he do that?" she said in an awed whisper.

The Irishwoman threw up her hands. Anxiously she replied:

"Faith, I don't know. He's up to somethin', I can tell by his manner. Whenever he jokes that way it's to hide he's bein' scared. It's some kind o' trouble he's in—that's sure!"

With a great effort Maggie choked back the words that leaped to her mouth. She was seized by a sudden impulse to make a clean breast of everything, to tell this woman how she had acted on her suggestion and taken what did not belong to her so she could get away to Wyoming, and that she had had as accomplice her own son, who was now keeping out of the way of the police for a crime which might send him to prison for a long time. She tried to speak, but the words stuck in her throat. She could not confess she was a thief even to this woman, who had first shown her the way. Just as she was undergoing this mental struggle there was a knock at the door and Alice appeared.

"May I come in?" she said pleasantly.

CHAPTER XVI

THE young girl greeted the two women cordially. She was sorry to see Mrs. Bates, for she wanted to speak to Maggie alone. But her manner was none the less amiable. Turning to the stevedore's wife she said:

"How do you do, Maggie? I thought you might be in now." Shaking a finger at her she continued playfully: "You little runaway! What made you leave us like that?"

The young woman looked away. Evasively she said:

"I was just so tired yesterday—I didn't think ye'd mind."

"That was all right," replied the visitor sweetly; "but we couldn't imagine where you had gone. You'll come back to us when you feel rested, won't you? I should be dreadfully disappointed if you didn't."

Unaccustomed to words of kindness, and yearning for them as flowers do for sunshine, the young wife turned to the visitor. Wistfully she said:

"Would ye really, Miss?"

Affably Alice went on:

"When I came home late in the afternoon I waited in my room expecting you would be in for our usual chat, and when you didn't come I was positively lonesome!"

Maggie smiled as she replied naïvely:

"Thank ye fer missin' me."

Quickly the young girl added:

"So I have come down to have a good chat with you——"

Frightened, the young woman looked at her inquiringly.

"What about?" she exclaimed nervously.

"Oh, everything."

The Irishwoman took the hint. With a significant wink at her neighbor, she said:

"I'll leave ye alone then." As she went toward the door she whispered to the visitor: "Cheer her up a bit. She's down in the mouth."

She went out, and Alice turned to the stevedore's wife.

"I felt you were not exactly happy at Mrs. Burke-Smith's. Why didn't you confide in me?"

The stevedore's wife looked away. Evasively she said:

"Why, there wasn't anythin' to confide."

Approaching her, Alice said kindly:

"Haven't we agreed to be friends and help each other? Won't you tell me what the trouble is?"

The young woman turned quickly and, as if seized by a sudden impulse, she took hold of both the visitor's hands. Passionately she exclaimed:

"Oh, if I could only tell ye!" She stopped suddenly and looked away.

"Tell me what?" demanded Alice.

The young woman shook her head sorrowfully. Dejectedly, she said:

"I can't—that's all!"

Sympathetically, the visitor laid a hand on her shoulder. Gently she said:

"Maggie—you're in trouble—you must tell me everything! Perhaps I can help you before it is too late. What is the real reason for your sudden departure from our house yesterday?"

For a moment the young woman stood as one transfixed. Her face turned a deathly white, her entire body was shaken by convulsive trembling. She could not go on like this much longer, suffering atrociously alone, confiding in no one. Here was one good kind friend who did not blame her, who offered to help her. Yes—she would tell her everything and throw herself on her mercy. Eagerly, feverishly she started forward, tears in

her eyes, her hands clasped as if she was about to throw herself on her knees in supplication, when all at once a heavy step was heard on the staircase outside. Quickly Maggie drew herself up and stared, terrified, at the door. The words she would have spoken froze on her lips. Alice, alarmed, looked at her in surprise.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"It's my man!" muttered the young woman stolidly.

Schultz entered boisterously, slamming the door behind him. When he first caught sight of the visitor his face betrayed annoyance, but, respectfully, he removed his cap and stood awkwardly in the background waiting for her to speak. The young lady bowed cordially.

"How do you do, Mr. Schultz?"

"How are you, m'm?" he said, with cool civility.

The young girl smiled as she went on:

"Maggie and I have just been having a talk."

He shrugged his shoulders, as he replied, with some bitterness:

"H'm! Another one of them talks where she comes out cryin'?"

"Oh, I hope not," laughed the visitor. Turning to his wife, she added: "You'll be more cheerful now, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, miss," murmured the young woman.

Schultz gave a snort of defiance as he said gruffly:

"Well, she ain't workin' fer your crowd now. So I guess ye hadn't better bother about it."

Quickly Maggie made a protesting gesture.

"Oh, Heinie!" Apologetically she said: "He don't mean that, miss—sure he don't."

"I know, dear," said the young girl, as she turned to go. "It's all right—good bye."

With a good-natured smile and pleasant nod, she went out. As the sound of her footsteps receded in the distance, Maggie started busying herself to get her husband's dinner. Turning to Heinie, she said reproachfully:

"Heinie, ye oughtn't to have said that!"

He laughed as if the matter were of no importance and, approaching his wife as if to caress her, he exclaimed good-naturedly:

"Come, now, don't bother about them. We're through with that bunch for good. I've some bully good news fer ye!"

"What news?" she said, looking up.

"The strike's called off."

She sighed as she answered:

"So you told me yesterday!"

"But there's somethin' better than that," he went

on enthusiastically. "Work on the docks is goin' to be rushed. That means I can make enough to take ye out to Wyoming in less than a month."

"In less than a month!" she exclaimed, with a cry of mingled joy and anguish. For a moment she stood staring at him, laughing hysterically, ready to cry. Then she relapsed into a dead silence, staring straight in front of her. He watched her in growing amazement. Finally, losing patience, he exclaimed, with irritation:

"Say—Maggie, what's the matter with ye? When I told ye yesterday the strike was off, ye didn't seem to care a great lot. Are you gone daffy all at once, or what's the matter? Ain't ye glad the strike's over and we'll get the money we want?"

Looking at him as if dazed, she stammered:

"Yes, I'm glad, o' course!" With something in her voice that sounded like a sob, she added: "Did ye say ye can raise the money in less than a month?"

"Easy," he replied; "workin' night shifts and Sundays—that's double pay."

She opened her mouth to speak, but something in her throat choked her utterance. The perspiration started from every pore. Her hands grew cold as ice. Turning her haggard eyes on him, she almost sobbed:

"Oh, Heinie—why didn't ye tell me?"

He looked at her in utter bewilderment.

"Tell ye?" he exclaimed. "Why? Didn't I jest find out myself?"

The tears she was unable to control were rolling fast down her cheeks. Ah, why had she not waited, why had she not known this sooner? So he should not see her agitation she rose and pretended to be busy at the stove. Controlling herself, she said, in a cold, matter-of-fact way:

"Dinner's almost ready. D'ye want to wash yer hands?"

"That's right!" he replied, jumping up. "I'm hungry, too."

Rolling up his sleeves, he went out to the sink on the landing, humming a cheerful air. Returning almost immediately, he asked:

"Where's the soap?"

"I brought it in here," she answered quickly; "Steve's always swipin' it. It's on the shelf."

As he went to get it, he growled:

"Steve likes soap, does he? Guess it'll take more than soap to get *his* hands clean." Returning to the sink, he added good-naturedly: "Poor old Steve, ye know I feel so good that our own troubles are over that I could almost feel sorry for him."

Maggie looked up and frowned. She couldn't feel sorry for him. He was the cause of all her misery and suffering. Vindictively she muttered:

"I wouldn't bother fer him."

As she ran here and there, getting the things ready for the noonday meal, Heinie reëntered, drying his hands on a towel. Standing watching his wife as she worked, he said cheerfully:

"No more frettin' now, Maggie. Eh—we're going to have money in the bank. Oh, say! I'll tell ye somethin' good."

Busy at the stove, Maggie looked up.

"What?"

"Do ye know Lichenstein, the pawnbroker?"

Crash! The iron stove lifter had fallen from her nerveless hands to the floor. Turning a deathly white, the young woman, terrified, looked up and gasped:

"Why do you ask that?"

Busily engaged in fastening his shoe, Heinie did not notice her agitation. Indifferently he went on:

"He said ye came into his shop last night, and hocked a diamond brooch."

She opened her mouth to tell the lie ready to her lips, but the words would not come. Her throat was dry and parched. Her tongue seemed paralyzed. Finally, with an effort, she said:

"Me hock a diamond?"

"Yes," he said, laughing boisterously. "Fer a hundred and thirteen dollars. What do ye know about that?"

"He must be crazy!" she muttered, turning away.

Still busy with his shoe, he went on:

"He see'd ye on the street with me once, and I guess the party must have looked somethin' like ye. I told him we wasn't soakin' the family jools just yet."

The young woman gave a sigh of relief. She had not foreseen that danger. But Heinie seemed reassured. More calmly she said:

"He's crazy, all right—come on now—and eat, if ye goin' to."

Her husband rose and, going to the table, got ready for the meal. Cheerily he said:

"Well, what ye givin' us for supper? Ye know there ain't no harm in loosenin' up a bit now that things are goin' to come easy."

As he spoke there was a rap at the door. Nervous, her heart constantly in her mouth, she steadied herself at the table while Heinie went to open the door. It was Rafferty. The stevedore greeted the policeman cordially.

"Hello, Bill! How's everything?"

Looking at the wife over her husband's shoulder, the detective replied laconically:

"Pretty fine, how are you?"

Noticing that Rafferty's eyes were fixed on his wife, the stevedore made introductions.

"This is my wife," he said proudly.

The detective nodded. Bluntly he said:

"How are ye, ma'am?" Turning to the husband, he said abruptly: "Ye ain't seen that fella Steve around here, have ye?"

The stevedore smiled grimly.

"No, sir! He don't come in here—he knows what he'll get."

With another keen look at Maggie, the sleuth went on:

"Oh! I see. An' ye ain't seen him anywhere round to-day?"

"Nope!" replied Schultz.

"Have you, Mrs. Schultz?" asked the sleuth, addressing the wife.

"Yes," she stammered. "That is—no, I haven't!"

Schultz laughed.

"Well, which is it?" he demanded.

"No, I ain't seen 'im," she said, shaking her head, trying her best to conceal how much she was trembling.

"Oh!" said the detective dryly.

"Nothing doing, I guess, Bill," said the stevedore.

The detective gave a grunt.

"Thanks," he said. "I'll look upstairs." With another keen glance at the young wife, he nodded: "Good afternoon, ma'am!"

He went away, and the stevedore shut the door. Maggie, trembling, turned to her husband. Nervously she said:

"Heinie, who is that man?"

The stevedore laughed.

"He is Bill Rafferty, a plain-clothes cop. Wonder what that fella Steve has been up to now!"

Terror-stricken, the young woman was scarcely able to conceal her agitation. Turning away to the sideboard, to hide her fright, she said, with affected indifference:

"I wonder——"

The stevedore shrugged his shoulders.

"Any trouble he gets into is coming to him. He's a damn bad egg!"

Setting the table with feverish agitation, his wife said suddenly:

"Heinie, ye know ye got me all worked up about goin' to Wyoming again—now yer seein' yer way clear."

"That so?" he replied indifferently, burying himself in a newspaper.

Hesitatingly she went on:

"I'd like to go sooner if we could."

Something in the tone of her voice made him look up from his paper. Somewhat impatiently he said:

"Can't ye wait three or four weeks? What's ailin' ye?"

Hysterically she cried:

"Oh, I hate this place!—I hate it!—I can't stand it!"

He looked at her in surprise. Puzzled, he said:

"I know ye don't like it, but ye been here long enough to git used to it—an' I'm doin' the best I can."

She nodded.

"I know ye are, Heinie—I——"

He rose from his seat and, going up to her, put his arms around her sympathetically. Consolingly he said:

"Ye mustn't let ye'self go that way. Aw, yer fidgety an' all tired out. If ye hadn't quit that Burke-Smith woman you'd have been down and out soon. Now jest keep a-lookin' ahead—the time'll go before ye know it. Here, you let me set the table, you take a rest!"

Pushing her into the chair he had just occupied, he started setting the table himself. She made no resistance and watched him for a few moments in silence. Then suddenly, as if she had waited to get up courage to speak, she said:

"But, Heinie!—s'pose we *can* go—s'pose we can—will ye?"

He laughed, as he replied:

"My dear little girl—I'll do anything for ye I can, but I couldn't get the money sooner to save my life."

Hesitatingly, nervously, she stammered:

"I know you can't, Heinie—but—jest suppose'n *I* could fix it, would ye be willin' to start to-night?"

Looking at her in amazement, he exclaimed:

"You!"

"Would ye?" she asked eagerly. "There's a train at eleven!"

"*You* fix it!" he said again, staring open-eyed.

"Yes," she said tremblingly; "I can git the money."

"You can get the money, *you?*"

"Yes, I—I got it."

"Got what?" he exclaimed, thunderstruck.

"A hundred——"

"You got——"

Quickly thrusting her hand in her bosom, she drew out a roll of money and showed it to him. Eagerly she went on:

"Right here! Now will ye start to-night? There's a train goes at——"

Bewildered, he held up his hand.

"Wait a minute!" he exclaimed; "where did ye get that?"

"I borrowed it," she answered *evasively*.

"Who from?" he demanded.

"Miss Alice."

"The lady what jest left?"

"Yes."

"Why—she didn't say nothin'——"

Hastily she explained:

"She didn't want nothin' said about it. She's a good friend o' mine—so she lent me the money."

"Lent ye a hundred dollars?" he exclaimed, opening wide his eyes in surprise. "What could ye give her for security?"

"I didn't give her nothin'. She jest took my word we'd pay it back when we could." Leaning toward him, she went on eagerly:

"Now will ye start to-night? I've *went* and borrowed this money—will ye?"

He shook his head as if perplexed.

"I can't get this through my head," he said.

"This strange woman hands you a hundred with nothin' to show fer it?"

Angered by his obstinacy, she said peevishly:

"I was workin' up there and she got to like me—she wanted to help me——" Rising and pacing restlessly up and down the room, she went on with some irritation: "That's why I wanted ye to talk nice to her when she was here."

For a moment the stevedore sat as if dazed. He didn't know what to say or think. This was the first time he had ever heard of rich folks doing anything like that for the poor. Certainly it was very kind of the lady, and he ought to feel very grateful. Awkwardly he said:

"I never thought she was that sort." Still puzzled, he added: "She lent ye—with interest——"

Maggie stamped her foot petulantly. How obstinate some men were! Why did he talk so much about it? Impatiently she replied:

"Yes—if that's how ye do it."

"How much?"

"How much what?" she asked nervously.

"Interest?"

"Oh, I don't know nothin' about interest," she stammered confusedly.

"I thought ye just said—— I'll have to see her an' find out. We can't take charity——"

Terror-stricken at this suggestion, she exclaimed:

"Ye mustn't see her, Heinie! She don't want no one else to know. It's a secret between me and her."

"But——" he protested.

"I'll write to her," she said coaxingly.

The stevedore said nothing. After all, why should he bother? But it was a kind thing to do, all the same. Admiringly he said:

"Say, she's dead white."

Pleased that he seemed to acquiesce, she went on earnestly:

"She is, Heinie—she's jest the best woman in the world. I'd die fer her." Changing the subject, she went on eagerly: "Now, Heinie, can't we get out to-night? There's a train at eleven——"

He smiled as he replied indulgently:

"Well, if we can't git out to-night, we'll go jus' as soon as we can."

"Yes," she cried ecstatically; "let's go to-night! I'll start in to pack right now. Oh, Heinie, I'm so happy!" Throwing her arms around his neck, she kissed him. Then, beside herself with joy, almost shouting: "We're goin' to-night—we're goin' to-night!" she ran away into the next room to get ready her things.

Left alone, the stevedore lit his pipe and sat at the table, plunged deep in thought. He was glad to see the little girl happy, of course, and he would be glad to get away himself, but somehow he did not exactly like the way things looked. It was all too good to be exactly the true thing. He didn't like this mysterious loan unsecured and without mention of interest. Folks never make such loans as that no matter how charitable they may be. He would like to see the young lady and ask her about it. It was only right he should know what she expected in the way of interest. As he stretched across the table to get another match, he heard voices on the landing outside. It was Alice and the doctor going downstairs. Jumping quickly to his feet, he ran to the door and called:

"Oh! Lady!"

"Yes," replied Alice's voice.

"Could I see ye a minute, please?"

The young girl appeared in the doorway and looked at him inquiringly, as if surprised at being called. Awkwardly he added:

"Could I speak to ye alone, please?"

"Why—yes," she smiled. Turning round and speaking down the stairs, she called out:

"Ralph, wait for me downstairs!"

Then, coming into the room, she stood and

waited to hear what he had to say. Somewhat embarrassed how to begin, he stammered:

"First, I want to say—I'm sorry for bein' gruff a while ago."

She smiled as she replied, with a laugh:

"Oh, I knew you were disturbed about something."

"It wasn't that, m'm," he said quickly; "I was sizin' ye up with the rest of the crowd that comes down here. I—well, I didn't know ye was different—but Maggie just told me——"

"That I am always to be her friend," she interrupted quickly. "I hope you'll let me be a friend of yours, too, Mr. Schultz."

"Why, yes—of course," he stammered confusedly.

He shifted uneasily about on his feet, not knowing what to say next, and yet determined to get to the bottom of the matter. So absorbed was he in trying to find the exact words in which to express himself that he did not hear the bedroom door open and his wife enter. As the young woman came in, and saw her husband, whose back was turned to her, in conversation with Mrs. Burke-Smith's niece, she knew it could only be about one thing. Transfixed with terror, she stood watching, listening. After a pause, the stevedore made a great effort and went on:

"But she's been tellin' me the kind of friend ye are—the big white thing ye done for us, and—I want to thank ye for it!"

The young girl looked up in surprise. Smiling, she said frankly:

"Why, I haven't been able to do much yet, except to offer my friendship—have I, Maggie?"

She glanced at the young wife, and immediately saw that something was wrong. Schultz, now well started, plunged clumsily ahead:

"I know—Maggie said ye didn't want it spoke of—that's why I asked to see ye alone, but I wanted to thank ye, and ask ye about the interest."

"Interest?" exclaimed the young girl, puzzled.

"Yes," he said, with a nod. "I wasn't clear just how much it is."

She stared at him in bewilderment.

"What interest?" she demanded.

"Why, interest on the loan—on the hundred, o' course!" As the visitor showed no sign of comprehension, he continued: "Ye meant it to be a regular business loan, didn't ye?" Glancing at his wife, he added: "Maggie said——"

He stopped short. Looking up suddenly, he had caught the two women giving each other significant side looks—a look of appeal and terror in Maggie's face, a dawning light of understanding in the face

of the young girl. Realizing that Maggie must have told her husband something which she wanted her to back her up in, Alice said quickly:

"Why, yes, yes, of course, Mr. Schultz."

But the man's suspicions were awakened. Looking at them both, he exclaimed:

"Why, what's wrong?"

By this time Alice had recovered her self-possession. Calmly she said:

"You see, I don't know much about such things, so I decided to leave that to you."

Looking at her in doubtful silence for a moment, he asked suddenly:

"Would five per cent. be about right?"

"Yes, I should think so," she replied calmly.

The stevedore was not convinced even yet. Yet it all seemed straight enough. Dubiously he said:

"You're sure that's all right, m'm?"

"Absolutely."

His face brightening and, stepping impulsively forward as if to express his gratitude, he exclaimed eagerly:

"You're doin' an awful big thing fer us, miss! Yer givin' us a chance to go out to Wyoming and start life all over, and live like a man and a woman should—that means a lot—'specially to Maggie; and ye let us have the money in a way we ain't

ashamed to take it. I can't thank ye right, like I should. God bless ye! That's all I can say—an' I give ye my word of honor to send it back, interest and all, out of the first money we make!"

"I'm sure you will," she smiled, giving him her hand. "I hope you will have great success in your new life in Wyoming." Turning to Maggie, she said kindly: "Remember, dear, you are going far away to a new country, to start life anew." Significantly she added: "Above all things, remember that—to start life anew!"

The stevedore's wife was not able to look up. Choking with emotion, she murmured:

"Thank ye."

"And whatever happens," went on the young girl, "if you should ever need me, you'll let me know; you've promised me that, haven't you?"

Scarcely able to keep from sobbing aloud, torn by fear and mental torment, Maggie merely nodded her head. Going up to her, Alice kissed her. Gently she said:

"Good-by, dear!" A low sob, hardly heard, answered her. Agitated herself, the visitor turned quickly to the stevedore.

"Good-by, Mr. Schultz!"

With a farewell gesture of her hand, she ran hastily downstairs to rejoin the doctor.

CHAPTER XVII

FOR some minutes after Alice's departure there was an oppressive silence. Schultz relit his pipe and, resuming his place at the table, sat puffing away in perplexed thought. Maggie, nervous and trembling, continued her work of setting the table. With growing apprehension she watched him furtively, wondering what he was thinking of, and continued her work of setting the table. She wished he would say something, or even beat her, if only to relieve the tension. At last he said, with a grunt:

"That's funny!"

"What's the matter?" she said, looking at him timidly.

"This loan business—I can't get it through me head yet—why was she so hazy about it?"

"I told ye she didn't want nothin' said about it, didn't I?"

"I know all about that," he interrupted testily; "but when I *did* say it she didn't seem t' know what

I was talkin' about. An' what was the matter with you?"

"I was scared ye'd make her mad. Ye're always doin' the wrong thing; I told ye she didn't want nothin'——"

"When did she give ye this money, anyhow?" he asked suddenly.

For a moment she was nonplussed. Confusedly she replied:

"Why—jest before I left Mrs. Burke-Smith's."

"Why didn't ye tell me about it yesterday?"

Seeing she had blundered, she said quickly:

"I mean she promised then. She didn't give it to me till to-day."

"Then what ye bin goin' around so down in the mouth about if ye knew ye could get away?"

Irritated and growing more nervous every minute under his searching questioning, she cried impatiently:

"What's ye drivin' at? I didn't know if she'd keep her promise or not, did I? Well, sit down an' eat yer supper!"

"All right, all right," he said soothingly, to pacify her. Sitting down, he went on: "What's ye got that's good? Liver, eh? Say, we'll have real beef in Wyoming, won't we? That is if I can hit a cow—maybe I won't be a greenhorn."

"Oh, ye'll learn quick enough!" she smiled, relieved to see him change the subject.

"Just the same," he grinned, "I bet them cowboys have a gay time with me!"

"Mrs. Bates can put ye on to all the ropes."

"That's right," he exclaimed. "Let's have her down!" Going out into the hall, he called upstairs: "Oh, Bates, are ye eatin'?"

"Sometimes," replied the Irishwoman's voice.

"Well, come on down and eat with us."

A few moments later the Irishwoman entered, good-natured and smiling. Seeing the spread, she exclaimed:

"What's all this fer? Some one send ye a basket?"

"Better'n that," laughed the stevedore; "we're goin' out to Wyoming, and we want ye to tell us all the angles. I don't want them cowboys to think I'm a rubel!"

The Irishwoman beamed on them both.

"So ye're really goin', are ye?" she exclaimed. "I heard the strike was off. How soon can ye raise the money?"

"We got it already," exclaimed the stevedore triumphantly.

The Irishwoman stared incredulously.

"No!"

"Yes," he went on; "Maggie got a hundred-dollar loan from that young woman."

Mrs. Bates glanced sharply at Maggie who, not caring to meet her eye, pretended to be busy with the dishes. Enthusiastically she cried:

"Ain't she the darlint? I knew she'd do it!"

"You knew?" exclaimed the stevedore.

The Irishwoman nodded.

"She was talkin' to me upstairs."

Schultz opened wide his eyes.

"Why, Maggie said it was a secret!"

Realizing that she had said too much, and with another significant glance at Maggie, Mrs. Bates replied quickly:

"Shure it was, she told me the secret."

"Well, anyhow," said the stevedore, with a shrug of his shoulders, "we're gettin' out o' here—and we got to thank Maggie for it. I couldn't 'a' done it in a thousand years."

"No, I guess ye couldn't," she smiled, with another glance at the wife.

"Put another cup on for Bates, Maggie," he said amiably.

"She can have mine—we only got two," she replied.

Quickly he said: "Use that silver mug the woman gave you." Springing to his feet, he took

down the little silver baby's mug. Looking at it regretfully, he said: "Ye know I'm sorry she give ye that. That's plain charity."

"I wish ye'd let up on that!" cried Maggie, hurt in her most sensitive feelings.

"Well, maybe I am hep on it, but——" he laughed.

"Ye'll use the mug, all the same!"

"First time I've touched it," he laughed.

Seeing something inside of it, he put his hand in and pulled out some pink baby ribbons from which, as he shook them out, something hard fell to the floor.

"What's all this junk?" he exclaimed, in surprise. "Did she give ye them, too?"

"Yes," she replied sullenly.

Shrugging his shoulders, he said:

"I'd think ye'd be ashamed to take things like that."

"They ain't worth nothin'," she retorted.

"Just the same, I think ye'd better send the stuff back."

"Shure, an' offend the lady after she's made the loan," interrupted Mrs. Bates angrily. "Lord, Dutch is Dutch, and ye can't kill it!"

"Well, anyhow, I don't like it," he said angrily.

Her face red with anger, Maggie snatched the

things from his grasp. Putting the cherished ribbons and pins back in the cup, she placed it on the far side of the table, out of her husband's reach.

"If ye don't like 'em, leave them alone. They're mine!"

"Oh, for heaven's sake, if yer goin' away, talk about that and quit yer squabblin'!" exclaimed Mrs. Bates, her patience exhausted.

"All right, Batesey! Tell us about Wyoming," laughed the stevedore good-naturedly. "Don't ye wish ye was goin' back there to see the hills, and the trees, and the roses——"

"Now don't start on that again," said the Irishwoman. "There ain't no roses in Wyoming."

They both laughed boisterously, while Maggie, little in the mood for gaiety, remained silent. She was so nervous that the things kept dropping out of her hands. Afraid that the detective might reappear at any moment with a warrant for her arrest, she sat in constant fear and trembling until at last, unable any longer to stand the strain, she threw down her knife and fork. Petulantly, almost in tears, she exclaimed:

"Heinie, if we're goin' to start to-night what's the use of loafin' about here? I wanta git packed."

"Now?" he said, in surprise.

"It's five now, but I can git packed in time."

"Yes. Why don't ye? What's the good of stayin' here?" interrupted Mrs. Bates, seeing that the young wife was in need of her support.

"Suppose you go and buy the passage now?" went on the young wife eagerly. "Bates and me will do the packin', and then if we can get ready——"

The stevedore stared at her in amazement.

"Well, of all the crazy stunts!" he exclaimed. "Why don't ye wait till to-morrow, anyhow?"

On the verge of complete collapse, made still more nervous by his resistance and constant questioning, the young woman broke down. Bursting into a violent fit of weeping, she sobbed:

"Oh, Heinie, I—I hate the place so!"

The Irishwoman gave the stevedore an indignant look.

"Go on, Heinie, humor the child! She's nervous. There's no reason why ye can't."

Rising from his seat, he said good-naturedly:

"All right. I'll go and buy the tickets, an' if ye can get ready we'll beat it."

Jumping to her feet, laughing and crying hysterically by turns, Maggie danced about with delight. Excitedly she cried:

"Oh, Heinie, will ye? We'll be ready, all right. We'll be packed and waitin' when ye get back; pull

them bags out of the other room, will ye, Mrs. Bates? Oh, Heinie, I'm so glad—I'm so glad—I'm so glad!"

Schultz stood looking at her, laughing at her enthusiasm. Presently he said:

"Ye mustn't get too excited about all this, now, or ye won't finish up nothin'."

Mrs. Bates rose and went into the bedroom to get something she had left there. The stevedore took his hat from the rack. Turning to his wife, he said:

"Have ye got the stuff that takes us?"

"The money!" she gasped. "Yes—I have it." Thrusting her hand inside her dress, she drew out a roll of bills and handed it to him. Hastily she said:

"Here ye are—now hurry, Heinie. Ye know where t' go?"

He took the money and carefully counted it.

"Hundred, five, ten, thirteen——" Suddenly he stopped. "What's this?" he exclaimed. Then he began again: "Fifty, seventy-five, ninety, hundred, five, ten, thirteen. That's right!"

He looked at his wife in amazement. Growing pale, she stammered:

"Oh, I give ye thirteen too much, didn't I?"

"Yes, how's that?" he demanded roughly.

Confusedly she tried to explain.

"Why, why, ye see—I had thirteen dollars extra."

"Ye had? Where did ye get it?"

"I bin workin', ain't I?"

"Ye didn't have it yesterday?"

"Yes, I had. I was savin'—so I didn't tell ye about it?"

"Why not?"

"Why—I—I was savin' for Wyoming—I mean before Miss Alice lent me the money—I was afraid ye'd laugh at me so——"

She faltered under his cold scrutiny. Contemptuously he exclaimed:

"It's pretty thin!"

Panic stricken, she exclaimed:

"What ye mean?"

He made no answer. A hard look came into his face, a look she had never seen there before, disbelief in her, suspicions of his own wife. The lines about his mouth tightened as he said:

"Now, see here, Maggie, don't make me ask questions."

"What's the matter with ye, Heinie? What's ye drivin' at?" she faltered, not daring to look at him.

He remained silent, and stood looking at her,

trying to read what was in her mind. Why was she deceiving him? What did it all mean? Weren't they wretched enough without anything worse coming to them? He did not even dare think what was already formulating itself in his mind. Slowly he said:

"I can't help puttin' two and two together. Now, don't stall—explain."

"Explain what?" she demanded.

"How this came to be a hundred and thirteen dollars."

"The thirteen's money I was savin', I tell ye."

Watching her closely to see the effect of his words, he said slowly:

"A hundred and thirteen dollars—the exact amount of money Lichenstein handed to a woman that looked like you, that hocked a diamond brooch."

Taken by surprise, at a loss what to say, she turned red and pale by turns. Wildly, hysterically, she cried:

"Why, ye crazy thing! Ye ain't sayin' that woman was me, are ye?"

"No," he said doggedly. "No, I'm jest puttin' it up t' ye."

With pretended indignation, she went on angrily:

"Just because some woman gets one hundred and

thirteen dollars on a brooch, and Lichenstein says she looks like me, I can't help that, can I?"

The last words were uttered in a frightened scream, like the cry of some hunted animal brought to bay by the hounds. Thinking something had happened, Mrs. Bates rushed in from the next room. Alarmed, she exclaimed:

"For the Lord's sake, what's wrong now?"

In tears, almost fainting, unable to speak from fear and nervousness, Maggie cried:

"Some woman hocked somethin' at Lichenstein's and got a hundred and thirteen dollars——"

"An' looked like you!" interrupted her husband grimly.

"He don't even know me," she retorted.

"Can't ye see it's just a coincidence?" said the Irishwoman, turning to the husband, in an attempt to placate him.

The stevedore shrugged his shoulders.

"Well, let's drop Lichenstein—we'll say ye saved the thirteen. Now tell me about the hundred."

"What ye thinkin' now?" she answered, more and more confusedly, as she sank deeper into the mire of falsehood. "Don't she know whether she lent me it or not? Maybe she's crazy, too!"

The stevedore raised his hand. Calmly he said:

"Just a minute. She was just in here. I thanked her fer the loan, and she didn't understand what I was talkin' about. She did the best she could to save ye, but she didn't lend ye that money."

Helplessly, hopelessly, she still struggled against the odds.

"That's right," she exclaimed, "don't use no sense about it—just make up yer mind bull-headed I'm lyin' to ye!"

Anxious to mend matters, Mrs. Bates gave the husband a nudge.

"Get on to yerself, Dutch! Can't ye see yer makin' trouble out o' whole cloth?"

He hesitated as if half ready to listen. More leniently he said:

"Yer right, maybe I am. Just because things don't strike me just right, I ain't got a right to talk to Maggie like this."

"Thank God yer comin' to yer senses!" exclaimed the Irishwoman fervently.

Turning to his wife, he said gruffly:

"Now, Maggie—git on yer hat."

"What fer?" she demanded, in alarm.

"You're comin' with me," he said determinedly.

"What ye mean?—where?" she exclaimed.

"To see Lichenstein."

The young woman drew back, her whole body trembling in revolt.

"No, I won't," she cried defiantly.

Raising his voice, he said angrily:

"D'ye hear, put on yer hat."

She shook her head helplessly.

"I ain't goin' to be made a fool of like that."

The stevedore grew pale and turned away.

"That's enough for me!" he said, in a low, constrained tone.

The two women watched him, pale and anxious. A moment later he turned round. His face was hard and determined looking. Addressing their neighbor, he said quietly:

"Bates, I want to see Maggie alone."

As she went toward the door, the Irishwoman said appealingly:

"Don't be rash now, Dutch, ye may find out before long what kind of a mistake you're makin'."

"I'll take care of that," he said angrily. "Get out!"

When the door had closed the stevedore turned again toward his wife to resume the merciless inquisition. She awaited him, pale and defiant. Before he could open his mouth, she said quickly:

"Now, ye needn't start in again—I—I didn't tell ye the thing just as it was."

"No—I guess not," he said grimly. "Now, tell us about the brooch."

For a moment she hesitated. Should she go on lying? What was the use? Her nerves simply could not stand it any more. Sullenly she blurted out:

"Well, it was me that hocked it—Miss Alice gimme it to hock. It belonged to her."

"Go on," he commanded sternly.

"Well, that's all there is to it," she said defiantly. "She wanted to lend me the money and didn't have it on hand, so she let me have the brooch to raise it on."

Seeing him staring at her coldly and unbelievably, she asked:

"Well, ain't it clear enough? Can't ye get that through yer head?"

Angrily he broke out:

"It's plenty clear enough. It's lies, lies, lies—from the start to finish!" Suddenly springing forward and gripping her by the wrist, he cried:

"I'll get the truth out of you before I'm through!"

In mortal terror she gave a scream.

"Heinie, you hurtin' me!"

Menacingly, his fist raised, he advanced on her. Wrathfully he exclaimed:

"Will ye tell me?"

Making no answer, she began to cry. Sniveling, she said:

"Ye're a nice one, ain't ye? Ye're tryin' to make me say I took somethin', when I didn't—I didn't! She give me the brooch, I tell ye."

He shook his head skeptically.

"Women of her kind don't do things like that. If she didn't have the money, she'd have got it some other way than through a hock shop——"

"I tell ye she——"

With a sneer he went on:

"If ye wasn't so tangled up in lies ye'd see how damned funny the whole thing sounds. She didn't give ye that brooch. Ye took it, didn't ye? Didn't ye?"

"It wasn't that exactly," she sobbed.

"Not exactly?"

"I'd like to tell ye the truth, but—ye make it so hard for me——"

Releasing his grip and more calmly, he said:

"Go on, then."

Panting, breathless, scarcely able to speak, she gasped:

"I—I wouldn't rob Miss Alice, not for anything, she's the best friend I got—if ye knew how much I cared for her ye'd understand."

"Don't beat about the bush," he said angrily.

"Well," she continued, "yesterday afternoon Mrs. Burke-Smith's house got robbed."

"Robbed!" he exclaimed, in astonishment.

"Yes, by a fake plumber. A wash basin got busted—they telephoned for a man to come and fix it—by and by this fella come. He started workin' in the room next to the one I was sewin' in, and then he sneaked downstairs and was robbin' the house, when the door bell rings an' the real plumber shows up. Well, he comes rushin' through the sewin' room, an' tells me what he is an' says he'll divide with me if I'll help him get out. I dunno why I did it, but I hid him till the coast was clear, and he made his getaway. I dunno why I did it, it all happened so sudden—but that's just how it was, Heinie!"

He looked at her closely.

"An' ye didn't know this fake plumber before?"

"No, Heinie, no."

"Never saw him before in your life?"

"No, never, of course not."

"An' how about that sink, didn't you bust it?"

"Why?"

"Ye told Bates——"

"I—I couldn't help it. It was cracked already, and a bottle fell off the shelf and busted through."

With a sickly smile of fear and desperation she added: "An old yellow bottle. I don't know what was in it."

He looked at her, hardly able to believe his ears. Could it be possible that his wife could have fallen so low as this? Disdainfully he said:

"So you bust a sink by accident, an' this guy happens along just at the right time, robs the house, divides with you, and nothin' was fixed up beforehand. So that's why ye couldn't be coaxed away from the place! Why ye'd stay there and work yerself sick. Ye was fixin' a deal with a thief, meetin' him time an' again. How do I know there wasn't somethin' more back of it? Somethin' more than just robbin' the house?"

This was too much for her to bear. She may have done wrong, but she had never been unfaithful to her husband in deed or thought. Like a flash she hurled the supreme insult back at him.

"Don't you dare!" she almost screamed.

Shrugging his shoulders, he said:

"All right. I take it back. Now tell me who was the fella? Who was the man?"

She made no answer for a moment. Then slowly the name dropped from her almost frozen lips:

"Steve!"

For the space of a few heart-throbbing moments

the stevedore stood motionless, as if stunned. The blood rushed to his head, the veins on his face and neck stood out like whipcord. His first impulse was to spring forward, like the primeval brute, and strangle this woman who had been false to him and disgraced him, yet what was the use? Gradually he controlled himself, and presently, in a low voice of contempt, he asked:

"Ye got the ticket fer the pin? She took it from her pocket and handed it to him, and he added: "It belongs to the lady?"

"Yes," she murmured.

"And she didn't let on when she found out." Bitterly he added: "She pitied ye, I guess—she pitied both of us." Struggling for a moment to regain his composure, he asked: "The brooch was all Steve gave ye?"

"Yes."

"How about the silver cup, them gold pins and things?"

"Oh, that's just stuff that was knockin' about. Nobody wanted it, so I brought it home. It didn't matter."

He stared at her in blank amazement.

"Didn't matter? My God," he almost shouted, "what's got into ye, anyway?"

"You put the idea into my head."

"Me?" he exclaimed, starting back as if he had received a blow.

"Yes, you—you showed me the game we was up against. I was satisfied with things as they was till then. You think I'm just a weak fool that Steve got to help him. Well, now, I'll tell ye something. Ye're wrong."

Fuzzled by her attitude of defiance, he looked at her curiously.

"Just what's ye drivin' at?"

"I mean that I finally woke up to what I had comin' to me. Them people owned our home, they owned us, and if I dared bring a life into the world they'd own that, too. Well, they went too far, so I went up there and took what I needed—what was mine—I had a right to, I tell ye."

"Right?" he echoed.

"Yes, right. A right to my share of life, just as they have, just as any animal has. I didn't ask for comfort, I didn't ask for happiness; that's for their kind uptown—that's the law; but there's some things they've got to let me have: me—and the lowest animal livin', you're a man, an' you're goin' to have food and drink, ain't ye? Ye got a right to live, an' ye'll steal and ye'll murder to do it. Well, I'm a woman, and God give me a greater right even than that. He gave me the power to give life—



"YE DIDN'T SWIPE THAT TO GIT YER NEEDS OF LIFE, DID YE?"

p. 317

PROPERTY
OF THE
NEW YORK
SOCIETY LIBRARY

and there's no want o' my body or soul cries out so loud, it will be satisfied, my greatest right of all—they people come down here and warn me, warn me if I brought a life into the world, it'd be smothered out—burned up like so much kindlin', and for what, their comfort, their pleasure, think of it—I stole, I'm a thief, I'm rotten, I lowered myself in their eyes; well, let them think so—I stole for what I need, and in my own eyes I raised myself far above 'em, way far, far above 'em."

He listened in silence, too much dazed to interfere. Then, suddenly snatching up the baby ribbon from the table, and holding it up before her he demanded fiercely: "And how about this junk? Ye didn't swipe that to get yer needs of life, did ye? Ye wasn't buyin' yer passage to Wyoming with six yards of that, was ye?"

Shrinking back before his righteous wrath, she sobbed helplessly:

"No, no—I—no—Heinie."

"No," he thundered, "ye took it because ye was a natural born thief!"

"No—ye——"

"A thief, and couldn't help yerself!"

"I don't understand," she faltered.

"That'll take junk ye got no use for—junk like this—because ye can't keep yer hands off it——"

Waving a piece of ribbon in her face, he went on contemptuously: "Will ye tell me why ye steal baby ribbon? Baby pins—baby——"

Suddenly he stopped short. The expression on his face changed. Anger gave place to astonishment and awe. Now, for the first time, the truth dawned upon him. He understood the real significance of her unaccountable mania for collecting baby ribbons, baby mugs and what not. He recalled now the incident of the cradle—a purchase seemingly useless which he had never been able to understand. Falling back, his hand pressed across his brow, while she stood before him, trembling, he exclaimed:

"My God—my God!" Then, turning to her, his voice husky with awe and reverence, he held out his arms. "Why didn't ye tell me, Maggie—why didn't ye tell me?"

Like a child who had been scolded and is forgiven, she went to him, the tears coursing freely down her pale cheeks, a weight, which had seemed like a mountain, lifted from her heart.

"I—I was scared," she sobbed, "ye said if one came ye'd kill it!"

Overcome with emotion, the stevedore clasped her to his breast. How could he ever forgive himself? How the brave little woman must have suf-

ferred! If she had done wrong, it was for the sake of her unborn child, his child. Gently he murmured:

"God bless ye, little girl! I love ye for it!"

Sobbing as if her heart would break, she remained in his embrace, her head resting quietly on his shoulder. At last she was at peace. He knew her secret. Wyoming was as far away as ever, but she was happy now. Heinie understood. He was not angry any more. She was not compelled to bear the burden all alone. Closing her eyes, a blissful sensation of peace and security came over her. What had she more to fear? Shielded in Heinie's strong arms, she knew that she had a protector who would defend her from the whole world.

Outside the shades of night were falling. The house was perfectly still. Suddenly there was a creak on the landing outside, but they did not look up. Doubtless it was some one going downstairs. Why should they care? Were they not supremely content in their newly discovered joy? Had they looked up at that moment it might have been different. As the steps passed the landing window, a man peered in. It was the stern, inscrutable face of Rafferty the detective, which, as it shut out the fast dwindling daylight, seemed to cast an ominous shadow on their new-found happiness.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE storm clouds had drifted away. The distress and mental suffering of the past four weeks were succeeded, all at once, by a delicious sensation of intense, boundless relief. No longer the same peevish, fretful woman, Maggie danced, laughed and chattered like a happy child. The nightmare of the last twenty-four hours she banished from her mind. It was enough for her that Heinie understood. To build up the future, says the poet, Heaven shatters the past. The young wife took this literally. Gloom and despondency gave place in her to hope and joy. Once more the world was full of laughter and sunshine. What did either of them care so long as they had each other? Instead of being angry, as she had feared, Heinie was beside himself with delight. At last he would have what, in secret, his heart had craved for—a child to fondle and caress, a child to love and work for. If it was a girl, he hoped it would be like Maggie. If it was a son, she hoped

it would be like Heinie. And for hours they sat and discussed their plans for the infant who was not yet there. To lose no time, Heinie pulled out the cradle from its hiding place and, workmanlike, went over it carefully to see if it was in perfect order. No, the joints were loose. He must mend it. Setting at once to work, he got busy with hammer and saw, humming cheerfully as he toiled while Maggie, sitting close by, watched him in rapture, as one in a dream.

The day, filled with so much torment, was drawing to a close. The room, only dimly lighted by the dying embers in the grate and the fast-fading light outside, was full of dancing, purple shadows. Maggie was sitting on a stool near the stove, the book of "Mother Goose" rhymes in her lap. Heinie was still on his knees near her, fussing with the cradle, and while he worked she read to him some of the rhymes. After a time, unable to see any longer, she stopped reading and, laying down the book, watched him in silence. For a few moments he did not notice that she had stopped reading. Then, looking up from his work, he said:

"Well, ain't you going to read any more? What comes next?"

She turned again to the book. Laughingly, she said:

"Let me see. Oh, yes, here it is, this one:

"There was a man in our town
And he was wondrous wise,
He jumped into a bramble bush,
And scratched out both his eyes."

He laughed as he looked up. Gleeefully he said:
"That's what we're doing, Maggie! We jumped into a bramble bush and scratched our eyes out, and now we're scratching them back again." Resuming work on the cradle, he added: "Well, why don't you go on?"

Laying down the book and looking at him tenderly, she said:

"I love to watch ye, Heinie. Seems like as if every nail ye banged in there was jus' helping to build up somethin' for by and by."

He nodded approvingly.

"That's right, Maggie. We're just driving nails into the foundation of our future."

She did not speak for a little while, and then, after a thoughtful pause, she said:

"Heinie, don't it sort o' scare yer?"

"Scare me?"

"Yes—what's it goin' to be like. We're just goin' out there to take our chances—way off in them desert wastes, them lonesome lands that nobody else wants."

"Wastes, eh? Look at that cradle. Remember how you come by it?"

"It was half burned up in a furniture-factory fire."

"And ye lugged it all the way home because nobody else wanted it—but you and me know it ain't goin' to be wasted."

"No, thank God, no!" she exclaimed fervently.

Earnestly he went on:

"And no more is them lands out there that nobody else wants, or our future, or the lives of our kids goin' to be wasted. Waste is just a name for somethin' that fools don't know how to handle."

At that moment there was a patter of footsteps on the stairs. Looking out, he caught sight of one of the neighbor's tattered children going down. Bitterly he said:

"There goes waste for ye!"

With a deep sigh, she answered gently:

"Think! Ours might have been one of them."

"You don't want to think of that now," he interrupted quickly. "Just think of the chance we're givin' it—a chance to stand equal with the best of them—a strong body and a clean, clear mind and room out there on those lands that nobody else wants—room to do big things in. Say, years from now when we hear folks say: 'That young feller is

the son of a guy that worked right here in the docks, and the young feller's climbed right up to the top,' say, what'll ye think then, Maggie?"

"I suppose," she smiled, "I'll think of the night when me and you sat here alone dreamin' about it."

His job finished, the stevedore rose to his feet. Approaching his wife, he kissed her tenderly. With a light laugh, he said:

"Say, he wants to have a dandy eddication."

"You bet she does; I'll look out for that."

"A profession of some kind. I tell ye—when we get fixed I'll send for some books on surveyin' and study up. Maybe we can get him to be wantin' to be somethin' like that."

"Or maybe a actress. I always thought it would be swell to be that."

He laughed boisterously.

"Lordy, let's decide right here what he'll be! A surveyor or a actress."

She was silent for a moment, and then with a smile she went on:

"We'll be awful happy out there, won't we, Heinie? I never lived in the country before. Gee, how I love the trees and the flowers! Bates says I've got to forget the roses. Oh, Heinie! Don't it seem as if it was too good to be true? We're go-

ing away—jes' you and me and our happiness. Gee, I'm scared I'll wake up and find I was dreaming!"

"You ain't," he protested.

Looking at him apprehensively, she said, in a nervous, frightened voice:

"Or that something will happen. I'll be that scared till we start that somethin'll happen."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"Why—what can happen? There's nothing but to wait for four weeks till I can earn the money."

Nervously she went on:

"Oh, I know, but—oh, Heinie, why can't we go now? Let's take our chance to get away while we have it. Come on, Heinie—then we can send the money back from there."

He shook his head. Firmly he said:

"We can't sidestep the right thing that way, honey. Come, now, four weeks will soon be over."

"Oh, I s'pose so, but——" She made a short, nervous pause, and then she went on: "Heinie?"

He smiled at her. Encouragingly he said:

"I guess the sooner we see that lady and give her back her brooch the better."

"I—I s'pose so. Oh, I'm so ashamed!"

"Ye'd be a lot more ashamed not to. Think of going out there and trying to start new with that

on your mind! Square with everybody—that's the way to begin."

"Yes—I *got* to be square with *her*, I know."

Looking up at her quickly, he asked:

"S'pose we do it to-night? D'ye feel fit to go up to her house?"

"She'll be down here."

"Yes?"

"She told Mrs. Bates she wanted to see me."

"To-night, eh?" said the stevedore thoughtfully.

"I see—she's comin' down here to give you a chance to straighten things out yourself."

"It'll be so hard—I've been so rotten to her!"

"And that's why she's comin' down. She knows how much better ye'll feel when it's over. We ought to be grateful to her for making things so easy."

"I am," murmured the young woman fervently.

The husband rose to his feet. Picking up his cap, he said:

"Perhaps I'd better go and redeem the brooch before she gets here. She don't want to go inside of a pawn shop. S'pose ye give me the money and the ticket, and I'll go to Lichenstein's with it now. He's made that interest too high. I guess he was on."

As he spoke there was a sharp knock at the door.

It came so suddenly and unexpectedly that both were startled. Instinctively slipping the pawn ticket in his pocket, the stevedore called out:

"Who's there? Come in!"

The door opened and Rafferty came in. Maggie turned pale when she saw who it was, and grasped her husband's hand nervously, as if invoking his protection. The stevedore, quick to see the peril of this second visit, so soon after the first one, was at once on the defensive. There was nothing in the policeman's manner, however, to cause alarm. Good-naturedly he said:

"Stayin' in to-night, huh?"

"Yes, come in!" said Schultz awkwardly.

The detective shook his head, as he declined the invitation.

"No, jes' stopped to say hello."

"Glad to have ye!"

There was a strange, awkward pause. From the husband and wife the detective's keen glance went furtively all round the room, taking in every little detail, neglecting nothing, and finally his eyes alighted on the window of the fire escape. He seemed to be taking mental note of this way of egress, but he said nothing. Finally, after an oppressive silence which, to Maggie, trembling like a leaf, seemed to last years, his manner eased off a

little. Losing to some extent his stiff, professional attitude, he addressed them cordially:

"Hear the strike's off?"

"Start work to-morrow," replied the stevedore calmly.

"That so? Too bad it wasn't sooner." With a quick glance, he added: "Must 'a' got down pretty low, huh?"

Avoiding his eye, the stevedore stammered:

"Oh, me and Maggie had enough to see us through."

The detective elevated his eyebrows. As if surprised, he said:

"Ye did, eh? That's more than lots of 'em had."

"We'd set some money aside," said Schultz hastily.

"Oh, I see. That's a good idea."

There was another awkward pause, during which no one spoke. Feeling that he should say something, Schultz asked:

"See your man?"

"Who—Steve?"

"Yes. You was huntin' for him, wasn't you?"

Instead of answering directly, the sleuth gave the stevedore a keen look. Quickly he said:

"He ain't the best friend you got, is he?"

"Not a damn bit!" said Heinie frankly.

The detective smiled as he said:

"He's a pretty fresh guy, but, believe me, when I put him in the tank he stays to get his hair cut."

"Then ye ain't seen him yet?"

Looking hard at Maggie, who had turned her back to him so he could not see the agitation in her face, Rafferty answered:

"No. He's left the building." Watching her closely to see the effect of his words, he added, "And he didn't do it by the front door, neither."

"How d'ye suppose ye came to miss him?" asked Maggie faintly.

The detective jerked his finger in the direction of the fire escape. Sourly he said:

"Maybe them fire escapes is no good for fire, but they're good to fool a guy like me—jes' once—jes' once, that's all!"

"Think he beat it that way, eh?" asked Heinie.

"I got a hunch," said the detective, with a nod.

"If he's out of the building it won't be so easy to find him."

"That's right," he smiled. With affected indifference he added: "Well—I'll have to be satisfied with what I can get for the present. But I won't go to sleep on the fire escape again—that's a cinch! Well——"

"Why don't you come in and sit down?" asked the stevedore.

The detective shook his head as he turned to go.

"No, I guess I'll be wanderin'. Good night."

He sauntered carelessly out, and they stood still listening to his footsteps as he went slowly downstairs. Maggie, very pale, grasped her husband's hand convulsively, as if appealing to him for protection from some unknown peril that threatened. Even the stolid stevedore himself seemed upset. Quickly he went over and shut the door and, this done, he began to pace the room nervously, a troubled expression on his face. Maggie watched him for a few moments and then, timidly, she asked:

"What ye thinkin' about?"

"Huh? Why, jes' figurin'—that's all."

"Figurin' what?"

Making an effort to appear more cheerful, he said, with a smile:

"It'll take just twenty-eight days workin' double time to earn the money."

But she was not satisfied. He was deceiving her. There was something else in his mind. Now that everything had been explained, they must have no secrets from each other. Putting a hand on his shoulder, and looking up lovingly into his face, she said:

"What else was you thinkin' about?"

"Why—nothin' else. Why?" he stammered confusedly.

"Yes, you was," she insisted.

Trying to speak unconcernedly, he went on:

"Well, I was thinkin' I was glad Steve was out of the way—bad as I want to see him sent up. Now there's no danger of his talkin'."

An anxious look came into her face.

"D'ye think everything'll be all right now that Steve's gone?" she asked.

"Sure everythin'll be all right—when we give the brooch back to the lady," he said reassuringly. Trying to change the subject, he went on: "That's a good stove, ain't it?" Looking about, he added: "What d'ye figure we can get on the stuff in this place? It ought to be good for six or seven bucks."

She made no answer. She was not listening. Her thoughts were still on the recent visitor. Presently she asked:

"What d'ye think Rafferty came in that way for?"

Although far from feeling comfortable himself, the stevedore did his best to put a good face on matters. It was no use frightening her. Everything might be all right, but he didn't like the detective's manner. Something was brewing, that

was sure. Shrugging his shoulders he replied carelessly:

"Why—he just dropped in."

"What fer?" she insisted, looking up at him, a haggard, anxious look on her pale face.

"He's been up at Bates' place. I heard him nosing around up there." Changing the subject, he went on: "Say, I bet we can't get two and a half on the whole outfit! And it's worth every bit of ten."

"He's come in here twice like that to-day," she said musingly, her mind on only one theory.

"He was looking for Steve the first time," he interrupted.

"But he knows Steve ain't in the building now."

"He ain't known it long, because he——"

Suddenly he stopped to listen. There was a sound of voices outside. Going quickly to the door, he opened it and looked out. With a smile he turned to his wife. "It's the lady!" he said. Returning to where his wife stood, nervous and trembling, he put his arm affectionately around her. Encouragingly he said:

"Now we're going to clear our hands and our minds of the whole business, ain't we? In five minutes we'll be square with the world."

There was a knock on the door, and Heinie crossed and opened it.

Alice came in, smiling and amiable as usual.

"Good evening, Mr. Schultz. Good evening, Maggie." Looking around, she exclaimed: "Why, you haven't done much packing yet, have you? I wanted to hear more of your plans for Wyoming. The doctor was coming this way in his car, so I made him bring me." Turning to the stevedore, she asked: "Tell me—when did you decide to be a cowboy?"

The big fellow smiled.

"Why—it's for Maggie's sake we're goin', miss."

"Oh, I think it's a splendid idea—to go out there and start life anew—a good, wholesome, healthy life!" exclaimed the young girl. Turning to Maggie, she said, with great earnestness: "I want you to go with every good wish that I can give you. That's why I came down to see you again."

Maggie started forward. Now was the time to tell her everything. She would make a full confession and throw herself on her mercy.

"Oh, Miss Alice, I want to——"

The young girl interrupted her.

"But why haven't you started to get ready? I thought you were going at once?"

"No, ma'am," said Schultz, who stood by not

knowing what to say. "We ain't goin' just yet a while. In about a month."

Making another pitiful attempt, Maggie stammered:

"No, ma'am—we got to straighten things out! We got to——"

The visitor looked at her in surprise.

"Surely it won't take a month to get ready? I rushed down. I thought perhaps Mr. Schultz would be out getting the tickets or seeing friends, and you and I might pack things up together and have such a cozy little chat—talking over your new plans——"

The stevedore went toward the door.

"I see what yer driving at, miss," he said, with a smile; "you want to see Maggie alone."

Laughing, the girl replied:

"Now that you've guessed, may I?"

"And talk over that money business of this afternoon that you couldn't understand?"

"Why——" exclaimed Alice, embarrassed.

"Oh, that's all right," he went on. "We can both talk to you about it now, because Maggie and I have straightened it out between us."

"Have you?" said the young girl, looking at them both.

"She's told me everything," said the husband.

Bowing her head with shame, Maggie said contritely:

"Oh, Miss Alice, what did ye think of me when ye see me stand there and lie like that?"

The visitor put out her hand. Sympathetically she said:

"I knew that you were in some deep trouble, but I knew that whatever it was you were doing your best—and eventually you would do the right thing."

"She was doin' her best, miss. I'll answer for that!" said the stevedore.

"That's why I came down to see you—to see if I couldn't help you," went on the young girl.

"But stealin' wasn't the worst of it, miss," went on Maggie. "I turned against you—that hurt me worse than the stealin'."

"Tell me everything, dear."

Falteringly the young wife continued:

"I was in with that fellow that robbed your house. I had to do it—I had to have money to get away to Wyoming—but he give me a brooch that belonged to you for my share. I asked him to give me something else, but he wouldn't, so I had to take that. I pawned it—that's where I got the money. Ye don't know how ashamed I am, but if you only knew what I'm up against, I know ye'd forgive me."

Touching the visitor on the arm, the stevedore pointed to the cradle.

"That was the reason!" he said gravely.

"Maggie!" exclaimed the young girl, tears starting to her eyes.

For a moment the young wife was too much affected to speak. Then, almost hysterical, she exclaimed, in a vehement outburst:

"Oh, miss, if ye only seen what I seen—them things left empty—the little bodies taken away and the mothers crying over it! Oh, if you ever know the hell of sights like that, and I was scared—scared if I wouldn't get away from this place, mine'd be left empty like that!"

Breaking down, she sobbed violently. Going up to her, Alice put her hand sympathetically on her shoulder. Kindly she said:

"Maggie, I do forgive you. I do forgive you—there—there! Now we must think of what's to be done." Turning to the husband, she added: "Mr. Schultz, I want you to reconsider and take Maggie away at once."

He shook his head.

"I can't do that, miss."

"I mean," she said, "you must take the money that you have——" As he still protested, she went on: "As a loan from me. As we agreed upon this

afternoon, and leave here as soon as you possibly can."

Again he shook his head.

"But, Mr. Schultz," she protested.

He drew himself up, and with dignity went on:

"You must understand, we'd neither of us feel right starting out that way. There's only one thing to do—redeem the brooch and give it back to ye. I'll do it to-night."

"But if I ask you as a favor to me——"

"I'll have to refuse it—honest, miss, we don't need it that bad. Ye see, the strike's off—I can earn enough inside of a month—that'll be enough time."

"But that *isn't* time, Mr. Schultz."

Surprised at her insistency, he demanded:

"Why not?"

"My aunt doesn't take my view of this. I've tried to make her see, but——"

"She suspects Maggie?"

"Maggie left just at the time of the robbery. So far they've been able to trace nothing, but, oh, can't you see the danger? Please take this money and go!"

"Takin' the money wouldn't help us, ma'am. If we have to keep out of the way, why, New York's big enough for that."

"I'm sorry that you won't."

She remained silent for a moment as if deep in thought. Then quickly she said:

"I think you'd better let me have the ticket."

"Better let me redeem it for you, miss," he said.

"I'll take it, please," she said firmly.

Handing her the money and the ticket, he said:

"And here's the money we got on it. A hundred and thirteen."

Alice took the ticket. Studying it, she asked:

"Lichenstein's? Where is that?"

"It's two blocks down the street. I'd like to save you the trouble."

"It's no trouble. You've spoken of this to no one else, have you? No one suspects?"

"No one."

"Very well. You've returned this to me. We're square."

"Yes."

"So no matter what any one asks you, you know nothing about it? Will you promise me that?"

Taking her proffered hand, he said gratefully:

"Sure—thanks."

Turning to his wife, she said:

"The doctor's waiting in the machine. I'm sure he's tired. Good-bye, Maggie. Don't forget—we're square. I'm coming back very soon."

The stevedore opened the door for her, and she went out. Closing the door behind her, Schultz gave a sigh of relief. Looking at his wife, who was nervously pacing the room, he exclaimed:

"Well, that's off your chest! Don't you feel better?"

"I guess so."

He looked at her curiously.

"Frightened about the old woman now, huh?"

She stopped short and looked up at him, terror in her large black eyes.

"Oh, Heinie, if I got sent to jail now?"

"Well, I ain't going to let that worry you long. Put on your hat and coat. We'll have you out of this fix in about two minutes."

Hurriedly putting on her hat and coat, she said:

"Where are you taking me?"

He laughed.

"You can thank your friend, Mrs. Burke-Smith, for a nice little outing in Jersey."

She looked up joyfully. Her pale face beamed with pleasure.

"In the country?" she exclaimed.

"Yes," he said, "my foreman lives over there with his mother. I'll board you with them for a couple of weeks. Get you country broke before ye start for Wyoming. How's that?"

Clapping her hands with joy, she exclaimed:

"Oh, Heinie. I'm just crazy about it. What'll I pack with me?"

"Don't pack nothin'. We want to leave the build-in' just as if we was goin' fer a walk. Then nobody'll suspect us." Pinching her cheek, he added: "Ye want to spend yer time over there learnin' how to tell ducks from turkeys."

"All right, I'm ready."

"Come on, then." Turning as they reached the doorway he looked down at her and smilingly exclaimed: "This suits you about down to the ground, don't it?"

"Gee, I'm crazy about it!" she cried.

"Give us a kiss, then!"

She put up her face and his lips were still on hers when, suddenly, the stevedore lifted his head and listened. An anxious look came into his face.

"Wait!" he whispered, pushing her back into the room. "Go back!"

Hastily she drew back. Her instinct told her what it was. They had come for her at last. Pale and trembling she waited while her husband peered over the banisters to see who it was. Suddenly he darted back into the room, and hastily closed the door and locked it. His face was set and deter-

mined. Maggie, almost beside herself with terror, gave a little scream.

"Hush!" he whispered sharply.

Going quickly to the window giving on the hall, he pulled down the blind.

"What is it?" gasped Maggie, in an agony of fear.

"Be quiet!" he whispered.

He stood motionless a moment as if uncertain what to do. Then, as if an idea had suddenly occurred to him, by a rapid movement, he turned down the lamp and, dashing over to the other window, raised the shade. Instantly he recoiled, while Maggie, unable to restrain herself, gave a scream. A man was standing on the fire escape outside. With a suppressed oath, the stevedore jerked the blind down again, and retreated to the center of the room. As he did so, there was a sharp knock at the door. They made no sound and, after a pause, there came another loud knock followed immediately by a sharp command in Rafferty's voice:

"Schultz! Open up!"

Realizing the futility of resistance, seeing the impossibility of getting away, the stevedore went to the door and unlocked it. Then, falling back, he stood in a protecting attitude near his wife, who, too terrified to move, was in a state bordering on

nervous collapse. In a low whisper he said to her warningly:

“For God’s sake, keep yer head shut! Whatever happens, keep yer head shut!”

CHAPTER XIX

THE door was flung open and the detective entered quickly, followed more leisurely by Mr. Howland. The manner of both men indicated that their mission was a serious one. Schultz greeted the visitors in silence and stood waiting for them to speak, while Maggie, pale and apprehensive, stood timidly in the background.

"Light up!" ordered Rafferty, sharply.

The stevedore turned up the lamp, while the detective raised the curtain of the hall window. Then going to the other window he raised the shade and nodded to the man on the fire escape to come in. The officer raised the window and climbed into the room. Addressing his assistant and nodding in the direction of the window, Rafferty asked quickly:

"Did they try it?"

"Sure," replied the man, with a grin.

Rafferty looked at the stevedore. Sarcastically he said:

"They ought to run an elevator down there."

Turning to his assistant and pointing to Maggie he added, with a significant gesture: "That's the woman!"

Maggie gave a little scream and fell back.

"No! No!"

The stevedore stepped forward. Firmly he demanded:

"What you want with my wife?"

"I don't want her. Headquarters does," replied Rafferty grimly.

Trying to control his temper, but his face pale and resolute, the stevedore demanded:

"What you got agin' Maggie? Well, spit it out!"

Instead of answering the husband's question, the sleuth turned to the wife. Carelessly he said:

"You was working for Mrs. Burke-Smith, wasn't you, Maggie?"

"Yes," she answered in a low, weak voice.

"What made you pull out?"

"I was tired and sick."

"I told her to quit," spoke up Schultz.

"What for?" demanded the detective.

Glancing at Mr. Howland the stevedore answered bitterly:

"Seein' the value you put on life down here, I hated to see her take a chance in one of your own houses."

Rafferty made him a gesture to desist. Impatiently he exclaimed:

"Cut that talk!" Turning to Maggie, the sleuth went on: "Did you know the house was robbed about the time you left?"

"No—" she stammered.

Eyeing her keenly, he continued:

"By a guy that passed himself off as a plumber—come to fix a broken basin?" Quickly he added: "You broke that basin, didn't ye?"

"I—I didn't mean to," she stammered. "Heinie can pay for it!"

"That's all right! This guy is a good friend of yours, ain't he?"

"No, he ain't," interrupted the husband.

Quick to note the slip, the detective turned quickly to the stevedore.

"So—you know who I mean, do ye?"

"No, I don't," said Schultz hastily, realizing his blunder. "But you can't tell me she knows anybody of that kind!"

The detective turned to Maggie. Sneeringly he said:

"Steve is a good friend of yours, ain't he?"

"He wouldn't dare open his face to her!" exclaimed Schultz hotly.

The detective smiled cynically. With a shrug of his shoulders he said:

"Yes, he dared—this afternoon!"

"That's a lie!" exclaimed the stevedore.

Rafferty turned angrily on him.

"Shut up—you!" Turning suddenly to the trembling wife he said abruptly:

"Where's that diamond brooch, Maggie?" The girl trembled, but made no answer. "Well?" he exclaimed impatiently.

The stevedore interposed. Bitterly he said:

"So, the house gets robbed, and because Maggie quits the job it's up to her, is it? Well, you got to pull somethin' better than that before you go any farther, see!"

"If you don't like it here," answered Rafferty gruffly, "we'll do it at Headquarters." A little less sternly he went on: "Now cut it, Dutch, for your own sake! This bluff don't go. She was on the inside for Steve. We got all his stuff—he soaked it all in a Bowery pawn shop. There's a diamond brooch and some cheap stuff missing." Turning to Maggie he said: "That was your share. Where'd you put it?" She made no answer, and he continued: "Now you know how it is, the quicker you come through—the quicker you get out!"

There was a dead silence. No one spoke. After

watching them both closely for a few moments, the detective turned away and sauntered around the room, casting a keen glance here and there. Suddenly his eye lighted on the half-packed traveling bag. Stopping short, he exclaimed:

"What's this? Goin' away?"

"We was, but changed our minds," spoke up the stevedore.

The detective laughed.

"You're frank about it. Where was you goin' to?"

"Wyoming."

"That's a long walk when you haven't got the money," interrupted Mr. Howland, who up to then had remained in the background a silent witness of the scene.

"What do you expect to go on, Dutch?" demanded the detective dryly.

The stevedore spoke up frankly.

"Maggie borrowed the money. When we changed our minds about goin' she gave it back."

The sleuth laughed mockingly. Cynically he exclaimed:

"She borrowed some money and gave it back? That's good!" Turning to Maggie he asked: "Who'd you borrow it from, Maggie?"

She hesitated before she replied:

"Why—why, the lady said I mustn't tell."

Mrs. Burke-Smith's adviser made an exclamation of impatience.

"Oh, what damned tommy rot!" Turning to the detective he said: "Can't you see they're just stalling? Do you mean to waste my time here all night?"

"Just a minute—I'm doin' this!" said Rafferty, pushing the clerical gentleman unceremoniously aside. Addressing Heinie he went on: "Maggie tell you she borrowed it?"

The stevedore nodded.

"I know it's so."

The sleuth looked skeptical, yet the big fellow's words had the ring of truth. Somewhat puzzled, he said more amiably:

"I guess you're straight, Dutch—but I guess your wife's got you buffaloed!"

"Ye think so," retorted Schultz, "but the party who made the loan blew out of here not five minutes ago."

"They did!" exclaimed the detective in surprise. "You'd better tell us the party's name, Maggie—for your own good."

The stevedore stepped quickly forward.

"Sure, I'll tell ye!" he said eagerly. Looking at Mr. Howland he said:

"It's the young lady from your house."

"What! Miss Alice?" exclaimed the cleric.

"Say, what d'ye know about that?" laughed the stevedore.

Noticing Mr. Howland's amazement, Rafferty repeated comically:

"Yes, what d'ye know about that?"

"Why, it's preposterous!" exclaimed the adviser.

"The brooch belongs to the very young lady he speaks of."

"Oh, it does, eh?" exclaimed the detective with a look of surprise.

"Can't you see these people are just involving things to gain time?" went on Mr. Howland.

Looking closely at the stevedore and his wife Rafferty said:

"Didn't you know the lady was in the habit of loaning these people money?"

"I most certainly did not!"

"Now we're getting down to facts," replied the detective grimly.

"Do I understand," spluttered the clergyman, "that you believe this man's yarn?"

"Why shouldn't I?"

"Why, what proof has he?"

"Just at present what proof have you?" retorted Rafferty.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Mr. Howland indignantly.

Rafferty reflected for a moment and then he said:

"Now suppose you ring up your house and get this thing straight from the young woman?"

"Sure!" exclaimed Schultz. "Ask her. She'll tell ye."

Acting upon this suggestion, Mr. Howland turned toward the door with the intention of going down to telephone. Just as he reached the door Alice entered. He started back in surprise.

"Why, what on earth are you doing down here?" he exclaimed.

"Why, several things," she smiled sweetly. "I've come to see the sick child, and I've come to see Maggie."

With a frown of disapproval, the reverend gentleman said:

"Your aunt will be furious!"

The young girl did not seem much concerned. Calmly she retorted:

"Then you will have the satisfaction of seeing her so. She'll be here shortly."

He looked at her in dismay.

"You haven't dragged her down here to-night I hope?"

She nodded.

"That's exactly what Dr. Taylor is trying to do—if he's able."

Rafferty had watched the little scene in silence. A little perplexed at the turn affairs were taking, and looking at Alice he said:

"Is this the lady?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Howland.

The detective addressed the newcomer.

"Did you lend Maggie any money?"

"Why, yes," said the young girl frankly. "That is—I did, but they returned it to me."

"For what purpose did you lend it?" snapped Mr. Howland.

The young girl hesitated a moment and then quickly she said:

"Why—to go to Wyoming."

Rafferty gave a quiet chuckle. Almost inaudibly he exclaimed:

"That fits!"

Alice looked from one to the other in surprise.

"What's it all about?" she asked.

The detective turned to her.

"Then she didn't raise the money on your jewelry?" he asked.

"On my jewelry?" she exclaimed in a tone of the greatest surprise. Turning indignantly on Mr. Howland she burst out:

"Oh, I see! Merely because Maggie left our house at the time of the robbery, you've come here to persecute her! Really, Mr. Howland, I can't believe that my aunt will tolerate any such brutality as you are evincing in her affairs. It's cruel! It's inhuman!"

The reverend gentleman pursed his lips. Bump-tiously he replied:

"There is no desire to persecute. We merely wish to get back some of the articles that were stolen."

The young girl's eyes flashed with anger as scornfully she went on:

"Nearly everything that housebreaker took has been recovered. Is anything still missing of such great value that you must hound this woman against whom you have no evidence?"

"Wasn't your brooch valuable?" inquired Rafferty quietly.

"My brooch?" exclaimed the young girl, looking at him in the greatest surprise.

"Yes—your brooch!" said Mr. Howland, with a snort of triumph. "We discovered after you left the house this morning that your jewel box had been rifled."

"My jewel box?" she exclaimed again.

"Yes," he snickered. "No doubt you were too

tender-hearted to mention the fact to us last night."

"My jewel box?"

Rafferty scratched his head as if quite unable to make any sense out of the whole thing. With a grin he exclaimed:

"Say, didn't you know about that?"

"My jewel box?" again exclaimed the young girl.

"Yes, yes!" said Mr. Howland impatiently. "Your diamond brooch."

While talking, Alice had, with apparent carelessness, unbuttoned her wrap, and in doing so exposed the brooch, which was seen glistening at her throat. Maggie, quick to see it, started eagerly forward.

"That's it! That's it!" she exclaimed.

Putting her hand to her throat where the brooch was fastened, Alice turned toward the detective, and in the coolest manner possible asked:

"Do you mean this?"

The sleuth said nothing, but looked at Mr. Howland.

"Is that it?" he demanded.

Thunderstruck, quite unable to understand, the clergyman stammered:

"Why—why, yes."

Angrily the detective turned on him.

"Say, what's the matter with you people?" he exclaimed. "Do you want to jug people for goods

you've got on your back? Say, what do you think the police force is for? Something to play with? Something to break into honest men's houses whenever the sweet fancy strikes you?"

Trying to calm him, Mr. Howland raised his hand deprecatingly.

"Just a minute, officer." Going up to Alice he said: "You didn't wear the brooch when you left the house this morning. At least your aunt told me you did not."

"Really!" exclaimed the young girl indignantly. "I don't believe I require such violent enlightenment concerning my own actions."

"I beg your pardon," said Mr. Howland apologetically, "but——"

Turning to the detective, Alice said:

"I took my brooch to the jeweler's to be fixed—yesterday afternoon."

This sounded plausible enough, but there were still some little points to clear up, and Rafferty had still a few questions to put. Suddenly he asked:

"Say, if Maggie never saw that brooch before, how did she know it just now?"

"Why, it's very simple," exclaimed the young girl. "She's often helped me to dress at the house."

Suspiciously the sleuth went on:

"Huh! Very good friends, ain't ye?"

"Very."

"When were you down here last?"

"Let me see—yesterday. No, this morning, early."

The detective turned to the other plain clothes man. With a grin he said:

"What d'ye know about this anyhow?"

The officer shrugged his shoulders, and his superior turned to Mr. Howland. With disgust he exclaimed disdainfully:

"Say, you don't want a detective—you want a lady's maid!" Again addressing his assistant he said:

"Rubber around in that other room!"

The policeman went into the bedroom. As he did so there was a knock at the front door. Schultz went to open it, and Dr. Taylor entered. Rafferty looked up.

"Well, what do you want?" he growled.

Alice turned quickly to the newcomer. Eagerly she asked:

"Well, Ralph, did you bring her?"

"She's on the stairs," he answered with a smile.

"So cross she wouldn't even let me help her up."

Going out on the landing and speaking downstairs he called out encouragingly:

"This is the last flight."

Maggie, frightened, turned to Alice.

"Oh, Miss, will she——"

Reassuringly, the girl answered:

"I've brought her down to help you, dear." Addressing Mr. Howland, she said haughtily: "Aunt will take things in hand now."

Rafferty, a grim spectator in the background, could not restrain a smile.

"Oh, ain't that nice!" he chuckled.

As he spoke, there was a commotion outside. Puffing and blowing, her face red from the unusual exertion of the climb of her own filthy tenement stairs, Mrs. Burke-Smith came in, followed by Dr. Taylor.

"Oh, dear——!" she gasped. "Somebody give me something to sit on, please."

Alice placed a chair for her, and she sank into it with a grunt of relief. Gratefully the young girl exclaimed:

"Oh, Aunt! I knew you'd consent to come!"

Her aunt eyed her sternly. Indignantly she exclaimed:

"Consent? I was dragged—literally dragged here by the doctor."

Mr. Howland advanced, sleek and pompous. With ostentatious anxiety, he lisped:

"My dear Madam, I'm afraid you've been put to a great deal of unnecessary trouble."

The old lady nodded. Peevishly she exclaimed:

"Oh, I know it, but what could I do? These young people have no consideration for one's feelings and I was so comfortably settled for the evening."

"Oh, Aunt," said Alice eagerly, "if you only knew what it means!"

"I know what it means, all this excitement,"—interrupted the old lady testily—"a perfectly wretched, restless night!" Giving her niece a reproachful look, she went on: "And of course I know you're back of it! You never think of others." With a sigh of martyrdom she added: "Well, now that I'm here, what's wanted of me? What's the situation?"

Rafferty stepped forward. He was tired of all this nonsense. It was time they got down to business.

"I'll tell you the situation," he said grimly. "As far as the Schultzes go you ain't got a look in!"

Mr. Howland bridled up.

"What do you mean?" he stuttered. "Haven't we got a warrant issued by the judge?"

"Yes," replied the sleuth with a smile, "and when

the judge hears the cock-and-bull story you handed him to get it, you'll find yourself mighty liable for contempt."

Mrs. Burke-Smith glared at the officer. Angrily she exclaimed:

"What are you saying? That we haven't told the truth?"

The policeman nodded. Pointing to Mr. Howland he said curtly:

"This man told the judge that he had absolute knowledge that Maggie had your brooch. And now one of your own party stalks in here wearing it!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed the old lady.

"Yes, Aunt, I had it," spoke up Alice quickly.

"You did, eh? Then why didn't you tell me?" Turning to Rafferty she went on: "But that makes no difference. Things have been disappearing continually for the past week."

The detective shrugged his shoulders. Indifferently he retorted:

"You'd better go home and take the trouble to hunt them up."

"But, my good man——" interrupted the old woman.

He raised his hand to silence her.

"My good woman—what do you think the New

York police force is for—something to play with—something to break into honest men's homes whenever the sweet fancy takes you?"

Mr. Howland advanced pompously. Angrily he exclaimed:

"You're dreadfully impertinent, young man!"

Losing all patience, Rafferty pointed to the door and exclaimed angrily:

"That'll about do for you. Now clear out—the whole lot of you!"

The reverend gentleman turned to Mrs. Burke-Smith. Soothingly he said:

"Suppose I take you home now? I'll see later what can be done with this matter."

Mrs. Burke-Smith shook her head. Dubiously she said:

"Perhaps as no articles of value have been found we'd better not prosecute these people." Pointing to Rafferty, she added angrily: "But I want this man reported for impertinence. That's much more important just now." Rising, she added loftily: "Mr. Howland, please call a cab! I couldn't survive going back in that doctor's machine."

She turned away and with her nose in the air swept majestically toward the door, accompanied by Mr. Howland. Before she reached it the plain clothes man entered from the bedroom, carrying

the package which Steve had left there. Holding out the bundle for his superior's inspection, he said significantly:

"Here's the stuff—I guess!"

Quickly Rafferty unwrapped it and looked at the contents.

"Silverware!" he exclaimed, with an expressive whistle. Recalling Mrs. Burke-Smith and Mr. Howland, who were already about to leave, he cried: "Here! Wait!" They retraced their steps, and the detective, holding out the opened parcel, demanded: "This from your place?"

Mrs. Burke-Smith put up her lorgnette and carefully examined it.

"Every bit of it!" she exclaimed looking up suddenly at Maggie, who, stricken with terror at this unexpected find, was standing by speechless and trembling. "This shows her guilt! Look at her face!"

Rafferty made a quick affirmative gesture. Making a sign to his assistant he said: "That settles it! Call the wagon!"

The policeman started for the door, but Alice stopped him.

"Wait! Wait—please!" she said.

Surprised and alarmed at this unexpected turn in the affair, the young girl hurried over to her

aunt. Things, indeed, looked black against Maggie, but there might be some mistake.

"Oh, Aunt!" she exclaimed imploringly, "you won't let them take her away!"

While she was arguing the matter with Mrs. Burke-Smith and Mr. Howland in one corner of the room, Maggie and her husband were conversing in low tones in another corner. This fresh blow had fairly staggered the stalwart stevedore. What could they say—the evidence was there? The stolen goods were found on their premises. A hard look came into the man's face. Why had she lied to him—why had she not told him everything?

"What'll I do?" whispered Maggie in a low, terrified voice.

"Why didn't ye tell me?" he demanded bitterly.

She looked at him panic-stricken. Vehemently she exclaimed:

"I never saw them things before. I swear to God!"

He shrugged his shoulders as if he could not believe her.

"How did they git there?"

Dazed, not able to explain it herself, she stammered:

"I—I don't know——"

Laying her hand on his shoulder she looked up

at him appealingly, with tears in her eyes, as if asking him not to lose his faith in her. But his gaze avoided hers. Drawing away, he demanded gruffly:

"What d'ye want to lie again fer? Don't ye see this has just broke down everythin' between us?"

"Don't say that, Heinie!" she sobbed. "No—no—don't say that, Heinie! I ain't lyin' to ye!"

"Then who is lyin'? How did the things git here?" he demanded fiercely.

She was silent for a moment, trying to collect the thoughts in her poor little brain, which felt as if it was on fire. Suddenly an idea occurred to her. Looking up she exclaimed:

"I have it, Heinie—it was Steve!"

"What!" he exclaimed.

"Yes," she went on eagerly. "He done it—I see it all now—I found him in here this afternoon——"

Without waiting to see how her husband received this theory, the young woman turned to the others, as if eager to tell them, too. Quickly Schultz restrained her.

"Wait!" he whispered. "It'll just make things worse to ring him in now."

The young woman's face fell. Yes—that would not do. If she admitted that much, they would find she had been concerned in it, after all. Well, there

seemed no help for it. She had done wrong. She must pay the price. Turning to her husband she said tenderly:

"Heinie, when I git outer jail will ye be waitin' fer me? Say ye'll be waitin' fer me! Maybe the judge won't send me up fer long. Maybe he'll let me down easy, but if I come home and find ye ain't here, it'll kill me. Promise ye'll wait fer me, Heinie—promise ye'll wait fer me——"

The stevedore grasped her hand and turned his head away so she should not see the tears in his eyes. His voice shaking with emotion, he said:

"Ye ain't a-gonna git sent up, honey, don't ye fret!"

Standing near the door, Rafferty was getting impatient. Gruffly he called out:

"Well, Maggie!"

Stooping quickly, the stevedore whispered to his wife:

"Sit over here an' keep yer head shut!"

Once more, in a louder key, Rafferty called out:

"Well, Maggie—we're waiting!"

The stevedore stepped forward.

"'Taint Maggie ye want—it's me!"

The detective looked at him in surprise. Mrs. Burke-Smith and the others came eagerly forward, curious to hear.

"What do you mean?" demanded Rafferty.

"I took the stuff," said Schultz boldly.

"You?" exclaimed the detective.

"What!" cried Maggie, starting from her seat.

She opened her mouth to protest, but he did not let her. Coolly he went on:

"D'ye think fer a moment that Maggie——"

"Just where do you come in?" interrupted the detective.

"I gave Steve the lay of the house——"

Instantly Maggie was on her feet. The stevedore tried to stop her, but she eluded him. At the top of her voice, she shouted:

"Don't believe that—he's just lyin' to ye!"

Mrs. Burke-Smith turned to the others. Sagaciously she remarked:

"It might easily have been this fellow. He used to come to the house and fetch his wife."

"Will ye listen to me?" interrupted Maggie almost hysterically. "It wasn't Heinie."

The detective beckoned to the stevedore.

"All right, Dutch. I'll have to take you."

Mrs. Burke-Smith walked over toward Maggie, who, her face rigid, white as a sheet, listened as one in the throes of some horrible dream. Surveying the poor young wife through her gold lorgnette, the old lady said condescendingly:

"And I shall continue to care for this poor creature." Patronizingly she added: "Think of the influence——"

Like a flash the stevedore's wife turned on her. Raising her fist as if she would strike her, she cried fiercely:

"You come near me if you dare!" Appealing to Rafferty, who, calm and inscrutable, still stood waiting at the door, she exclaimed:

"Can't ye see he's lyin' to ye? He's tryin' to save me from jail. I took them things——!" Snatching up the baby ribbons from the table she almost shouted: "Here—look at this stuff—baby ribbon! D'ye think Heinie'd steal stuff like that?"

The stevedore came forward. Interrupting her, he exclaimed:

"Wait a minute!" In an undertone to the detective he added: "Let me talk to her a minute."

The sleuth nodded consent, and the stevedore drew his wife aside. Earnestly he whispered:

"Maggie—you got to let me go! Ye got to——"

"No—no!" she sobbed, clinging to him with desperation.

"It was all my fault," he went on calmly. "I scared ye into it!"

"No—no—I couldn't stand it! I've nothin' in the world but you. I can't let you go, Heinie!"

Embracing her fondly and leaning down so that his cheek touched hers, he went on gravely:

"Listen, honey—there's some one else. Our little baby—he can't be born in jail. We can't start wrong like that——"

She drew back at arm's length and looked at him fixedly, a strange, unnatural light in her large dark eyes.

"Oh, that's yer reason!" she exclaimed.

He nodded as he replied:

"We can do that much fer it!"

"Jail!" she muttered half to herself. "It's as good as the gutter, ain't it?"

Stroking her hair, he said soothingly:

"We'll make the best of it, honey."

"The best of it!" she cried bitterly. "So I got my choice, have I—whether my child will be born in jail or in the gutter?"

Vainly he tried to calm her.

"Maggie," he pleaded, "don't lose yer head!"

Shrilly, hysterically she went on:

"I ain't! I'm just gettin' on to myself—the kind of a fool I've been—I——"

She stopped, too much overcome for utterance. Her bosom heaving, her pale cheeks streaming with tears, she broke down completely and burst into a fit of passionate weeping. Alice, much distressed

and not knowing how to help, watched her from the distance, but Mr. Howland, officious and pompous, thought he was called upon to interfere.

"Come," he said testily, "this noise won't save you!"

Turning on them with the ferocity of some wild female animal threatened by the loss of its young, she cried savagely:

"So! On your say so—the life I bring forth will be the scum of the earth, will it?"

"Maggie!" exclaimed Schultz, trying to silence her.

Mrs. Burke-Smith, startled, looked up.

"Life! You?" she exclaimed, in amazement.

The young woman bowed her head. Turning to Mrs. Burke-Smith and the others, and holding up her hands in supplication, she exclaimed piteously:

"That man was goin' to jail in my place, to save his baby from the shame of it. Why don't ye tell him it's no use? ye know it ain't!"

"What do you mean?" demanded Mrs. Burke-Smith in surprise.

Without stopping to explain, Maggie went on:

"It's comin' into the world a weaklin' to be shoved into the gutter—ye can't save it!"

"Maggie!" exclaimed Schultz, springing forward.

She stopped him with a gesture. Despairingly, pathetically she went on:

"Oh, what's the use? I lied, I fought, I stole—I wanted to give my baby a chance—that was right, wasn't it? I wanted it to be healthy an' strong an' decent—but it ain't no use—it ain't no use—there's somethin' wrong somewheres, I tell ye—an' mine's to be the scum o' the earth, cursin' me fer the very life I give it!"

"Maggie!" exclaimed her husband in agony.

She looked up at him, her eyes so filled with tears she could hardly see.

"Them's yer own words—y'all told me, an' it's the truth—ye rubbed it in till I've gone crazy with it—now I'm scared—scared o' what's comin'—I can't face it—it's too much to ask o' me—it's too much to ask o' any woman. It ain't no use—it ain't no use."

Pointing to her husband, who watched her in the greatest distress, she went on exaltedly:

"That man was goin' to jail in my place—to save his baby from the shame o' it!" Pointing to the cradle, she went on, with growing excitement: "He didn't want his baby born there!" She stopped, unable to continue from want of breath. There was a dead silence. Everyone was too much affected to interfere. Then, presently, she went on solemnly:

"Well—he needn't go now. I can take his place!"

The stevedore, with an exclamation of alarm, darted forward.

"What ye mean?" he demanded.

Excitedly and rapidly losing her self-control, she wildly waved her arms around the room. Hysterically she cried:

"I mean—I'll save it! I'll save it! From all this—from jail!" Pointing a denunciatory finger at Mr. Howland and Mrs. Burke-Smith, who had watched her aghast, she continued bitterly:

"I'll save it from those murderers—them human hogs—that can't live unless they fatten up their bodies on the weak, pitiful lives of our babies—them vultures!"

Mr. Howland turned to his companions.

"It's outrageous!" he exclaimed.

Maggie advanced toward him, shaking her fist in his face. Alarmed, he recoiled before her violence. Fiercely she went on:

"Yes, you I mean! Standin' there like overfed animals, with the blood of babies smeared about your lips! You'll stifle us! Ye'll hold us down to get the last nickel——"

Mrs. Burke-Smith covered up her face with her handkerchief. Weakly she called out:

"Stop her! Stop her!"

But no one could check the fierce words of denunciation that surged up to the young woman's lips.

Bitterly she went on:

"And when the sight gets too rotten, ye'll close your eyes like that, and tickle your holy souls with charity! Charity we pays for—us devils down here, with our health—our strength—our hopes—and if we'll let ye, even with the damnation of our unborn! But, by God, this time we won't do that! I'll beat ye to it—I'll beat ye to it!"

Snatching up the hatchet at the stove she went quickly to the bureau and drawing out the cradle began to rain blows upon it. Savagely she exclaimed:

"I'll save my child from them—this way—and this way—and this way!"

The cradle, now split up in a thousand pieces, was scattered all over the floor. The work of destruction was complete. At last, exhausted, unnerved, she threw down the axe, with a wild, despairing cry:

"God'll send you to hell for this, and I'll pray for it night and day! I'll pray for it!"

Bursting into a torrent of passionate weeping, she dropped on her knees and rocked herself back and

forth, the picture of human misery and woe. Then throwing herself over the fragments she wailed:

"You've killed my baby! You've killed my baby!"

Prostrate over the broken fragments, she lay there moaning helplessly. Heinie, too much affected to speak, knelt down beside her and tried to comfort her. The others, overcome by her outburst, stood by in silence. Mrs. Burke-Smith, visibly affected, was using her handkerchief freely.

Approaching Rafferty, the stevedore said quietly:

"I want to speak to my wife alone. Ask these people to get out."

Before the detective could reply Alice stepped forward.

"Wait, please," she said. Turning to Mrs. Burke-Smith, the young girl went on:

"Aunt, I had you dragged down here, and you said the excitement would cause you a wretched night. Will you blame me for this, or for other wretched nights—if at last you've been brought to see, to understand?"

Mrs. Burke-Smith nodded approvingly. Weakly she said:

"I've been a blind, selfish old woman!"

She kissed her niece and, turning away, began to talk in an undertone with Mr. Howland, who lis-

tened with a shrug of his shoulders. Rafferty, annoyed at all this delay, began to show signs of impatience.

"Well, what do you want done?" he asked.

Mr. Howland, full of airy importance, stepped forward.

"Mrs. Burke-Smith has decided to withdraw the charge."

"Oh, Aunt!" exclaimed Alice, with a cry of delight.

Controlling her emotion with an effort, Mrs. Burke-Smith said:

"I don't think I ever understood the circumstances before. I looked into things here too casually. I—I hope to do better from now on."

She turned on her heel and went out, followed by Mr. Howland. Rafferty stood in embarrassed silence. Since the charge was withdrawn he had no more business there. But he could not help admiring the pluck of the young girl who had been so clever in getting the young couple out of their trouble. Addressing Alice he said in an undertone:

"Say, you're a pretty smart young woman!"

"Am I?" she smiled.

"So your brooch was in the jeweler's, eh?" he

grinned. "I'll hand Dutch the price of a brooch if he can tell me what jeweler's you had it in."

"The charge has been dropped, I believe," she said haughtily.

"That's why I'm tippin' ye off now," he smiled. "I don't want to have you think me any more of a rube sheriff than necessary."

"You mean you don't believe my brooch was at the jeweler's?"

"Well, I gave you the best imitation I could of a credulous man! But, of course, when the other junk showed up——"

"Oh, I see. Thank you, Mr. Rafferty!"

"Well, good night, and good luck to you!"

He went out, followed by the other officer. Dr. Taylor, waiting for Alice, stood near the door. The stevedore was bending tenderly over his wife, who by this time had partly recovered her self-control. Alice touched him gently on the arm.

"Mr. Schultz, will you grant me a great favor?"

"Anything, Miss," he replied earnestly.

"Take Maggie out to Wyoming at once." Handing him two railroad tickets, she added sweetly: "I got these for you."

"Passage?" he ejaculated.

"Will you go?" As he seemed to hesitate, she

added reproachfully: "My first request and you refuse it?"

Overcome by this kindness, he said chokingly:

"But you got to let me pay it back!"

"Yes, of course, and with interest. I shall be a regular old miser about the interest," she added with a laugh.

Kissing Maggie affectionately, she turned quickly away, so the young wife should not see how much she was affected. Then going to the door and calling Dr. Taylor she said:

"Come, Ralph!"

She hurried away, followed by the physician, and the husband and wife were once more alone.

For some moments they stood there, too much affected to speak or move. The sound of footsteps died away in the distance. Once more the house was still. Once more the storm clouds that threatened their happiness had passed away. They were at peace again.

Exhausted by the terrible nervous strain of the past half hour, the young wife closed her eyes. The mental torture she had just suffered was now succeeded by a delicious realization that the worst was over, that her troubles were at an end. A new life opened now before them—a life of happiness and contentment. At last she would have what her

heart had craved for. They would leave this pestiferous spot of vice and misery, and go out into the great world, where the grass was green and the sky blue, and her child, when it came, would at least have a chance. It would grow up healthy and clean and strong, and in the sunshine of their new home, surrounded by their babies, she and Heinie would know a happy life they had never known before—a life of love and laughter and work! Maggie looked wistfully at her husband.

“Heinie!” she murmured weakly.

“Yes, dear?” he said tenderly.

Putting her arm lovingly around his neck, and pressing her cheek close to his, she murmured:

“Heinie, maybe there’s roses in Wyoming after all!”

THE END.





.

.

.







1875

1875

